THE ESSENCE OF SERVANT LEADERSHIP: A CASE STUDY OF A

FEMALE ADMINISTRATOR IN A PUBLIC SCHOOL SETTING

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The undersigned, appointed by the Dean of the Graduate School, have examined the dissertation entitled

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DEDICATION

I would like to thank my husband, Al Simmons, and my children, Cole and Leah, for always inspiring me to reach higher and complete what I have started. I am so appreciative that you were independent and accepting of the time I spent in classes and writing. Each of you has been an example to me through your hard work and goal setting. When I may have wanted to quit, I knew I couldn't let you down. I love you all!

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative study was to gain an understanding of the behaviors of a female servant leader in a public school setting and her impact on the staff and culture of the building. A purposeful sampling of 16 staff members participated in individual and focus group interviews and extensive interviews were held with the selected leader. The interview questions were semi structured and open ended to allow for the participants to share their personal recollections and add further insights to the information. Artifacts such as newspaper articles, meeting minutes, evaluations, and personal letters and notes were also examined.

The research questions focused on the leader's description of her leadership practices, the definition of the staff on the leader's behaviors, and the impact of the leader's behavior on school culture. The findings included a leader who relied on her faith for direction and renewal, built community through staff collaboration, and supported her staff in their professional growth. The staff described the leader as one who used collaborative decision-making, recognized staff strengths and used persuasion to encourage their participation and professional growth, experienced gender bias issues outside her building, and was selfless in her leadership tasks. Finally, the culture of the school supervised by the servant leader was family-oriented, celebrated student and staff successes, and utilized team work for school improvement.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

With the increased demands of the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2002*, there has been a renewed focus on successful leadership necessary to move schools forward in the 21st century. While the expectations and accountability of educators has increased, the organizational structure and administrative needs of our schools has shifted. This shift is found in the roles, relationships, and responsibility of our teachers and educational leaders (Crippen, 2005; Lewis & Murphy, 2008; Murphy & Seashore-Louis, 1999). In addition, leadership has become less hierarchal and more democratic as current research points toward the need for collaborative, transformative efforts among leaders and teachers to promote long term, sustainable growth in our schools (Leithwood & Duke, 1999; Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 2000; Lewis & Murphy, 2008; Maxwell, 1993). Fullan (2003) agreed by suggesting,

> The environment cannot be improved only from the top. The top can provide a vision, policy incentives, mechanisms for interaction, coordination, and monitoring, but, to realize this vision, there must be lateral development – that is, people at one's own level giving and receiving help across schools. In this way the moral imperative becomes a palpable, collective endeavor. (p. 47)

Therefore, as leaders in school districts are become increasingly aware of their impact,

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both academically and culturally, administrators have taken a more collaborative, transformational, "power with" stance (Brunner, 2002, p. 80).

Servant leadership, a transformative form of leadership (Spears, 2002), has recently emerged in the public school setting as a potentially effective style that focuses on the needs of stakeholders and encourages growth by listening, active participation, and nurturing of staff and students. Servant leadership, a leadership paradigm proposed by Robert Greenleaf in the 1970s, encourages leaders to become servants first, prioritizing on the needs of their stakeholders (Spears, 2002, 2004). It is also a leadership style that promotes a high level of self awareness, integrity, and trust. Servant leaders focus on promoting positive relationships among coworkers, building community and a foundation that enhances student and staff pursuit of common goals.

Servant leadership, often described as a paradoxical term, was developed by Greenleaf after reading the book, *Journey to the East*, by Herman Hesse (1956). The story is of a man named Leo and a group of travelers who set out on a long journey. Leo's job within the group was to care for the men by doing menial chores, assuring they were fed and comfortable and their needs were met. Well into the journey, Leo disappeared at which time the group of travelers fell into disarray and disbanded. Many years later, the narrator of the story came across Leo. It was then he realized that Leo, by his service to those in the group, was actually their leader. Leo was authentic and a servant at heart but his desire to care for those around him made him critical to the group's success. Greenleaf, a Quaker, strongly believed in the equality of all humans

(Crippen, 2005). This simple story supported his beliefs and buttressed his goal to work toward effective caring communities in the business and education world.

Although servant leadership was proposed by Robert Greenleaf, the 10 characteristics of servant leadership were defined by Spears (2002, 2004). Spears suggested the 10 characteristics are not all encompassing yet outline the traits developed by servant leaders. The first among these traits, often listed as critical to many leadership styles, is the ability to listen. Listening was described as hearing what is *not* being said as well as what is being spoken (Lewis & Murphy, 2008). It requires the servant leader to empathize with and walk in the shoes of the followers, or those being led. The other characteristics are traits and skills that enhance the leader's ability to focus on the needs of others and build community by bringing the followers into the process of leadership. The true servant leader often leads without pomp or fanfare. Many may not readily notice the work of the servant leader. Greenleaf (2003) described this phenomenon by stating, "They do not see the servant-leadership in action…. And that may be the fundamental key. Effective servant-leaders can be so subtle about it that all anybody is likely to see is the result. They don't see the cause" (p. 151).

In addition, the number of women in school leadership positions continues to increase (Shakeshaft, 1987; Sherman, 2000). Research on women in leadership revealed women may naturally exhibit characteristics of servant leadership. Women as school administrators report strengths in the areas of communication, collaboration and community building, and nurturing (Jablonski, 1996; Jamieson, 1995).

Although women continue to fill administrative position, it is not without angst. Even in the 21st century, women continue to find barriers above and beyond that of their male counterparts that they must endure and surmount in their leadership roles (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Harris, Ballenger, & Jones, 2007). However, women in leadership positions also realize supports that help them obtain and maintain their positions. Those supports come in the form of family, mentoring, and networking.

Finally, school culture is important to students, teachers, community members, and school leaders. The culture of an organization is always evolving and is influenced by various complex interactions between events, people, and other circumstances (Fullan, 2001; Morgan, 1977). Sergiovanni (2005) defined the concept of culture as the importance of ideology, shared values, and norms for behavior. The culture of schools is shaped by the students, staff, teachers, and leaders both at the building and central office levels (Honig & Copland, 2008). Furthermore, school culture continues to play a significant role in academic achievement, a benchmark related to school accreditation and student success (Deal & Peterson, 1999; Winterman, 2008).

Highly effective schools not only focus on academics but display an atmosphere that goes beyond a safe and orderly learning environment to create an atmosphere of a place where people *want* to be. Research on school culture and organizational health suggests that leadership has a direct impact on the overall status of the school culture. Sergiovanni (1992) stated, "Servant leadership is more easily provided if the leader understands that serving others is important, but that the most important thing is to serve the values and ideas that shape the school" (p. 125). To contribute to a positive school

culture, school leaders must have a clear view of the mission, vision, and values of their

school, as well as a deep awareness of their own value system.

Statement of the Problem

A wide variety of leadership styles has been studied over the past several decades.

No one leadership style has been identified as the most effective style in any one

situation; therefore, developing and maintaining effective leadership in school is an

ongoing challenge. In addition, the complex nature of the role as school leader, due to

accountability requirements of school boards, state level offices, and the federal

government, obscures the roll of leaders and challenges researchers in establishing the

leadership skills dictated by 21st century schools.

As educators continue to study leadership in schools, servant leadership has

increasingly been looked upon as a transformational branch of leadership where

"followers feel trust, admiration, loyalty and respect toward the leader" (Yukl, 2006, p.

262). Furthermore, Sergiovanni (1999) encouraged the utilization of the servant

leadership theory in our present day schools. He stated,

> Such ideas as servant leadership bring with them a different kind of strength – one
>
> based on moral authority….What matters are issues of substance. What are we
>
> about? Why? Are students being served? Is the school as a learning community
>
> being served? What are our obligations to this community? With these questions
>
> in mind, how can we best get the job done? (p. 61)

Regrettably, there is a lack of research regarding the positive impact of servant

leadership in the public education system. In addition to the lack of extensive research on

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servant leadership in schools, women in servant leadership is a topic that has not been fully investigated. Currently, women are underrepresented in the field of educational administration; therefore, as women increasingly seek out administrative positions in school districts, there is a need for support and information to buttress their professional growth specific to their gender. Although the amount of research on women in servant leadership has increased over the past decade, there is a dearth of research specifically focused on women servant leaders in the public school setting.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate in what ways, if any, a female servant leader impacted the public school setting and to describe how the leader's characteristics and skills manifested themselves in her principalship. Particular attention was paid to the culture of the school. Using qualitative data, the researcher developed "rich, thick descriptions" (Merriam, 1998, p. 29) to define the characteristics and impact of the female servant leader on her staff and students in the middle school setting.

Research Questions

While many leadership theories were presented in current literature, few studies were dedicated to servant leadership in the public school setting. Even fewer studies focused on servant leadership by women in public schools. The research questions for this study were designed to reveal descriptive, qualitative information on the manifestation of the skills of a female servant leader in a public school. These questions were designed to be used with a single, phenomenological case study, and participant's answers were examined for common themes found by working for and observing the

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selected female servant leader. In addition, the female servant leader was interviewed at length to discover personal attributes and her perceptions of how her leadership affected the staff and students. It was the intent of the researcher to discover strengths, barriers, and supports identified within the use of the servant leadership theory as well as the effect of servant leadership on the culture of the school.

The following research questions guided this study.

1. How is servant leadership exhibited by a female leader in a public school setting?

2. How do stakeholders in a public school setting describe a female servant leader?

3. How does servant leadership manifest itself in the culture of the public education setting?

<div align="center">Limitations and Assumptions</div>

The scope of this study describes the leadership in a selected middle school in a Midwest state. The limitations to this study were relative to the school district and selected leader, and designs used by the researcher. They are indicated as follows:

1. This study is limited to the responses regarding one specific female servant leader who served as a middle school principal at a school in the Midwest for seven years.

2. Because this study is a with-in site, single case study, the information gathered cannot be generalized.

3.   The sample was limited in size, with a total of 17 individuals participating in this study.

4.   The accuracy of information received is limited by the forthrightness of those interviewed.

5.   Six years have lapsed since the female servant leader has retired so incidents may include some incorrectness due to the accuracy of participant's memory.

6.   It was assumed that participants responded to questions using their own observations and experiences.

Definition of Key Terms

Following is a list of common terms used throughout this study. They are defined as follows:

Administrator. A person who is employed in a supervisory capacity in a school district, whether in a school building or as central office personnel.

Barriers. "Road blocks" or difficult situations that stand in the way of success on the job. Examples of barriers are unfair hiring practices, discrimination, attitudes of community, and time consuming duties outside of work.

Building community. An inclusive gesture to develop camaraderie and bring people together to work toward the good of all. Building community can be facilitated by listening to needs and focusing on a solution that would serve the majority of the people (Spears, 2004).

Descriptive case study. A study that "presents a detailed account of the phenomenon under study" (Merriam, 1998, p. 38). It is a "means of investigating complex social units consisting of multiple variables of potential importance in understanding the phenomenon….the case study results in a rich and holistic account of a phenomenon" (p. 41).

Collaboration. The act of groups of people sharing ideas and insights and working together toward a common purpose.

Commitment to the growth of people. Devotion by a leader to recognize and develop the potential of employees through nurturing and encouraging their personal, professional, and spiritual growth (Spears, 2004).

Conceptualization. Thinking beyond the day-to-day activities to encompass broad-based, long-term goal setting and planning. One of 10 characteristics of a servant leader (Spears, 2004).

Culture. "A pattern of basic assumptions invented, discovered, or developed by a given group… considered valid and therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to… problems" (Schein, 1985, p. 9).

Foresight. "The ability to see the outcome of a situation" (Spears, 2004, p. 15). It is one of 10 characteristics of the servant leader.

Healing. Helping to make a person whole by assuaging their emotional hurts and broken spirits. Healing is one of 10 characteristics of a servant leader (Spears, 2004).

Principal. The leader or headmaster in a public school setting. Principals oversee scheduling, curriculum, personnel, budgeting, and other day-to-day activities necessary for a school to function properly.

Public education setting. A public, non-profit educational setting for students grades kindergarten through grade 12.

Servant leadership. Leadership theory developed by Robert K. Greenleaf in the 1970s. Servant leaders have strengths in listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people, and building community (Spears, 2004).

Stewardship. Serving the needs of others and holding people or institutions responsible for prioritizing toward the good of all (Spears, 2004).

Support. People or systems used to uphold, encourage, and sustain employees on their quest toward success at work. Examples of support include mentors, networking groups, and flexible work schedules.

Stakeholders. A person or group with a direct interest, involvement, or investment in the school or school district, e.g., the parents, students, teachers, administrators, and board members.

Transformational leadership. Leadership theory that espouses motivation of employees by activating higher order needs, transcending their own self-interest for the good of all, and inclusion in the importance of task outcomes. "Followers feel trust, admiration, loyalty and respect toward the leader" (Yukl, 2006, p. 262).

Summary

Effective school leadership is critical in meeting the goals set forth by the federal government in the 21st century. While many forms of leadership have been studied in the past decades, no one theory has proven to be the best for any one given situation. Extensive research indicated leadership has become less hierarchal and more democratic pointing toward the need for collaborative, transformative efforts among leaders and teachers to promote long term, sustainable growth in schools. Since the 1970s, research has begun to investigate the merits of servant leadership and its espoused traits. Servant leadership, a form of transformational leadership, focuses on working alongside people, serving their needs and creating an inclusive environment where all are empowered to work toward the same goals, those which serve the greater needs of society. This theory encouraged leaders to build trust through a high level of self awareness, authenticity, and relationship building. Although no leadership theory is without detractors, this study was based on the premise that school leaders may be more effective when employing traits of servant leadership. This study was purposeful in selecting a female servant leader to investigate the manifestation of servant leadership when practiced by a woman administrator.

Chapter Two of this study is the review of related literature that includes four subsections: leadership theory, servant leadership, women in leadership, and school culture. The section on servant leadership describes each of the traits espoused by servant leaders and the research on women in leadership focuses on the barriers, strengths, and supports realized by female school administrators.

Included in Chapter Three, the research and design methodology of the study, are the following subsections: problem and purposes overview, research questions, population and sample, data collection and instrumentation, data analysis, and summary. Chapter Four includes the presentation and analysis of the data revealed through this study and Chapter Five will present the summary, conclusions, and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The *No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 (*NCLB) has created widespread concern in the nation's schools. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was reauthorized as the NCLB Act of 2001 and is the federal law affecting education from kindergarten through high school. School accreditation is linked with achievement and building principals are held accountable with the risk of losing their jobs or having their curriculum and building processes restructured by federal and state level department of education supervisors if students do not meet the required adequate yearly progress (AYP) (Henley, McBride, Milligan & Nichols. 2007; United States Department of Education, 2001). According to research, highly effective schools more readily reach their academic goals by fostering an atmosphere that goes beyond a safe and orderly teaching environment (Deal & Peterson, 1999; Hoy, 1990; Jerald, 2006). Effective schools must have effective leaders who are intentional about strengthening the social/emotional atmosphere by guiding staff members in the development of a strong learning community and promoting a positive school culture for students, parents, and other stakeholders.

Extensive research has been completed on leadership theory and traits. Although no one leadership style has been deemed a best practice by school leaders, current research suggested more democratic, transformational leaders may hold the key in promoting effective change in schools (Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 2000; Lewis & Murphy,

2008; Maxwell, 1993). Transforming schools required the leader be a master at building community and leading with a collaborative approach. Guiding coworkers to transcend their personal agendas and work toward higher order processes has been suggested. In addition, sustainability is likely only if staff is involved in school planning and growth. (Burns, 2000; Cacioppe, 1997)

Servant leadership, a natural extension of transformational leadership, has emerged since the 1970s and promoted additional transformational qualities for leading 21st century schools (Spears, 2002; 2004). Servant leaders promote change by choosing to serve first through listening to those around them, being empathic toward needs, investing in their staff members, and persuasively building community around common goals.

Furthermore, many of the traits espoused by servant leaders have traditionally been aligned with feminine qualities. Women display natural tendencies toward nurturing, excelling in communication skills, and working collaboratively. These traits have been lauded as transformational and useful in leading change (Shakeshaft, 1987). Mulvey (2009) stated, "Women have begun to use their own strengths in leadership to excel in…education institutions competing with men" (p. 34). Shakeshaft (1987) commented, "Traditional female approaches to schooling look like the prescriptions for administrative behavior in effective schools" (p. 7).

Leadership traits, with the focus on a female servant leader will be reviewed. The literature review included leadership theory, servant leadership, women in leadership, and school culture.

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Leadership Theory

Defining leadership was a challenge to researchers and authors. Rost (1991) noted over 60% of authors writing about leadership since 1910 failed to define the word leadership in their research. Although the definition of leadership may be arbitrary and subjective (Leithwood, Jantzi & Steinbach, 2000), Yukl (2006) defined leadership as "the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how to do it, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives" (p. 8). Gardner (2000) further defined leadership as "the process of persuasion or example by which an individual (or leadership team) induces a group to pursue objectives held by the leader or shared by the leader and his or her followers" (p.3). Many definitions of leadership also include words such as influence, power, and authority (Bensimon, Neuman, & Birnbaum, 1989; Leithwood & Duke, 1999; Yukl).

Additionally, leadership styles varied from person to person and organization to organization. Considerable time and effort were spent on studying leadership in the school setting. Leithwood and Duke (1999) reported findings on concepts of leadership in educational literature after analyzing contemporary literature on leadership in schools. They defined multiple distinctly different leadership models. Following is an overview and description of three of those models: (a) managerial, (b) contingency-based, and (c) transformational. Furthermore, the discussion includes how these leadership styles may appear within the educational setting.

Managerial Leadership

Management leadership was often looked upon as a top-down, classic hierarchical model with its roots in Max Weber, Frederick Taylor, and Herbert Simon (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). The industrial revolution of the 17th and 18th century shifted the production from individual master craftsmen to increasingly larger factories (Burns, 2000). The managerial leadership model was scientifically grounded in the time and motion studies pioneered by Taylor early in the twentieth century (Leithwood & Duke, 1999; Morgan, 1997; Nonaka & Takeuchi), and is often noted as "Taylorism" (Morgan, p. 26).

According to Leithwood and Duke (1999), managerial leadership "focuses on *the functions, tasks, or behaviors of the leaders* and assumes that if these functions are carried out competently the work of others in the organization will be facilitated" (p. 53). These studies were later applied to schools due to rapid student population growth and the need for large facilities rather than concern for student performance. While leadership emphasized vision and mission, management is centered on the day-to-day school tasks of budgeting, providing adequate materials, anticipating and preventing predictable problems, and managing the students and school facilities (Collins, 2001; Leithwood & Duke; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995).

According to Coyle (1997), today's school managers appeared as people who sit outside the classroom or in the central administration office, addressing student discipline problems and daily building routines rather than increasing student learning. Coyle also suggested the management-style leader maintained little contact with students and

teachers as their work is quite separate from the classroom. Coyle argued that school

leaders need to focus on both academic leadership and management to affect growth and

change. In a three-year project, Coyle and her co-workers researched the effect of

leadership versus school management and how effective school managers were in

building excellent schools. She stated that "if school leadership consists primarily in a

narrow interpretation as management, then the answer is, very little" (Coyle, p. 237).

Contingency-based Leadership

Contingency theory was interwoven in various leadership models such as

situational and path-goal leadership. According to Yukl (2006),

> Theories that explain leadership effectiveness in terms of situational moderator
>
> variables are called contingency theories of leadership. This type of theory is most
>
> useful when it includes intervening variables to explain why the effect of behavior
>
> on outcomes varies across situations. (p. 215)

Contingency theory reminded us that "context is crucial" (Lewis & Murphy, 2008, p.

133). Because all schools come with unique communities, students, and faculty with

varied training and experiences, the contingency-based school leader's skills reflected

how they read the context of each situation. The unique qualities of school included the

size, socioeconomic status, school culture, school board, and central office administrative

support. In addition, individual situations called for varied responses (Bensimon, Neuman

& Birnbaum, 1989).

Path-goal theory of leadership explained "how the behavior of a leader influences

the satisfaction and performance of subordinates" (Yukl, 2006, p. 218). Likewise, the

leader's behavior depended on various facets of the situation. For example, when the task was new to an employee, the path-goal oriented leader played an active role in removing barriers and guiding the staff toward success.

Situational leadership theory purported similar and overlapping constructs as path-goal theory. The involvement of the leader is dependent on multiple factors including the experiences of staff. Situational leadership was originally proposed by Hersey and Blanchard (1977) and specified "appropriate type of leadership behavior for different levels of subordinate maturity in relation to the work" (Yukl, 2006, p. 223). According to Yukl, "the level of subordinate maturity determines the appropriate mix of task and relation behavior for the leader" (p. 223). As the skill and experience of the staff member increases, the leader becomes less directive and more relational in daily interactions.

Path-goal theory and situational leadership are two examples of contingency-based models of leadership. Both leadership models lack explicit definition, and research on both theories has yielded mixed results (Bensimon, Neuman, & Birnbaum, 1989; Leithwood & Duke, 1999; Yukl, 2006). However, both theories support the positive use of flexible and adaptive leadership styles, the consideration of an individual's strengths, and guidance from leaders for their improvement.

Transformational Leadership

The term transformational leadership has appeared with increasing frequency in writings that surrounded education since the late 1980s (Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 2000b). Transform, as defined by Merriam-Webster online (2010), is "to change in composition or structure;...to change in character or condition." Bensimon, Newman, and

Birnbaum (1989) defined transformational leadership as one that "engages followers in such a way as to raise them to new levels of morality and motivation. Furthermore, transformational leaders have a vision, communicate meaning and explanations, gain trust through positioning, and gain recognition or attention through positive self regard" (p. 10). Following is the definition given by James MacGregor Burns (1978) in his book *Leadership*:

> Leadership over human beings is exercised when persons with certain motives and purposes mobilize, in competition or conflict with others, institutional, political, psychological, and other resources so as to arouse, engage, and satisfy the motives of followers. (p. 18)

> Yukl (2006) further stated the transformational leader "motivates followers by (1) making them more aware of the importance of task outcomes, (2) inducing them to transcend their own self-interest for the sake of the organization or team, and (3) activating their higher-order needs." (p. 262). Prominent in most descriptions of transformational leadership is the shifting of decision making from top level management to include stakeholders so they may have the conviction to rise above personal interests and incorporate correct principles purported in a collective mission designed by those stakeholders (Cacioppe, 1997; Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 2000b; Burns, 1978; Covey, 1991; Yukl, 2006). Burns (2000) stated, "Transformational…leadership reconstructs our thinking about leadership forever" (p. 53). In addition, Cacioppe explained when a transformational leader leaves the organization, followers continue on the path they collaboratively started to achieve their mission.

Transformational leaders are known to be excellent communicators which assist them in developing a trusting relationship with their followers (Lewis & Murphy, 2008). They communicate through persuasion, rather than coercing others, toward "a vision that inspires and motivates people to achieve something extraordinary" (Cacioppe, 1997, p. 336). Trust was enhanced when the leaders' actions, or non-verbal communication, were consistent over time and they "walked the talk" (Southworth, 2004, p. 3). To build a trusting environment, transformational leaders included employees in decision-making, and then trusted them to complete their tasks without constant supervision. Trust is also developed when transformational leaders reduce rules and policies to as few as possible to promote flexibility and accommodate human needs (Autry, 2001). With this end in mind, transformational leaders spend a great deal of time alongside employees listening, observing, and participating in their daily activities (Cacioppe; Maxwell, 1993; Kahl, 2004; Spears, 2002; Spears; 2004)

Furthermore, transformational leadership shifted the focus from the leader to the needs of the followers and created change for the betterment of all. According to Burns (1978), it "ultimately becomes moral in that it raises the level of human conduct and ethical aspiration of both leader and led, and thus has a transforming effect on both" (p. 20). When stakeholders saw their leader interested in the good of the whole, they were motivated to work toward the goal alongside their leader.

In the school setting, it was especially important to appeal to the staff for direction in leading school reform. Grogan (2003) implied school leaders should abandon the need for certainty, relying on research and best practice, but realize there are no "silver bullets

to aid… in their endeavors" (p. 26). Transformational leaders consulted with staff to discover areas of need in their district and included staff in finding solutions fitted to their particular circumstances. Leaders paid close attention to and involved front line employees in reform planning and implementation (Collins, 2001; Yukl, 2006).

In summary, a wide variety of leadership theories and styles have been researched and developed over the past century (Burns, 1978; Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 2000; Yukl, 2006). However, the definition of leadership and the theory implicit in various styles remains arbitrary and subjective (Leithwood, Jantzi & Steinbach). Definitions of leadership styles include words such as influence, power, and authority (Bensimon, Neuman & Birnbaum, 1989; Leithwood & Duke, 1999; Yukl). Finally, leadership styles vary from person to person and organization to organization. In this section, three leadership styles were reviewed: contingency-based, managerial, and transformational.

Current leadership research pointed toward the need for collaborative efforts among leaders and teachers to promote long term, sustainable growth in schools (Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 2000; Lewis & Murphy, 2008; Maxwell, 1993). In addition, transformational leaders paid close attention to and involved front line employees in reform planning and implementation; therefore, they promoted change driven from the ground level (Collins, 2001; Yukl, 2006).Transformational leadership styles, including servant leadership, shifted the focus not only on the resources of the leader and the followers, but created change for the betterment of all.

Servant Leadership

There has been a shift in the structure and administrative needs of our schools. This shift was found in the organization, roles, relationships, and responsibilities of our educational leaders (Crippen, 2005; Lewis & Murphy, 2008). Leadership has become less hierarchal and more democratic. Leaders are adapting to this change and are bringing more of a collaborative, "power with" (Brunner, 2002. p. 80) culture to their buildings. Several leadership styles readily lend themselves to these changes, especially those with transformational leadership qualities, including servant leadership.

The concept of servant-leadership, a paradoxical term, is now in its fourth decade. It was outlined by Robert Greenleaf in a 1970 essay titled, "The Servant as Leader." Greenleaf spent the later part of his career, after retirement from AT&T, serving as a consultant to various organizations including the Ford Foundation, MIT, Ohio University, Lilly Endowment, Inc., and the B. K. Mellon Foundation. Upon reflection of leadership in the business and education world, he began to develop the concept of servant leadership (Spears, 2004). It was his premise to "build a better, more caring society" (p. 11).

Robert Greenleaf (2008) initially described a servant leader by stating,

The servant-leader *is* servant first….It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve *first*. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. He is sharply different from the person who is *leader* first, perhaps because of the need to assuage an unusual power drive or to acquire material possessions….The difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant – first to make sure that

other people's highest priority needs are being served. The best test, and difficult to

administer, is: do those served grow as persons; do they, *while being served*,

become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to

become servants? *And*, what is the effect on the least privileged in society; will he

benefit, or, at least, will he not be further deprived? (p. 15)

In addition, Spears (2004) identified 10 characteristics central to the development

of servant leaders. These characteristics are: (a) listening, (b) empathy, (c) healing, (d)

awareness, (e) persuasion, (f) conceptualization, (g) foresight, (h) stewardship, (i)

commitment to the growth of people, and (j) building community. Spears acknowledged

these characteristics are not all inclusive but are at the core of becoming a servant leader.

Following is a description of each of the 10 characteristics.

Listening

Servant leaders are valued for their ability to communicate with their constituents

(Spears, 2004). Critical to communication is the ability to listen first to understand;

through listening other traits of servant leadership can be developed and nurtured

(Degraaf, Tilley, & Neal, 2004; Ferch, 2004). Therefore, servant leaders make a "deep

commitment to listening intently to others" (Spears, p. 13). Greenleaf (2008) stated, "One

must not be afraid of a little silence" (p. 19) and continued with the question, "In saying

what I have in mind will I really improve on the silence?" (p. 19).

Listening means not only hearing what is spoken but looking for body language, or

what is *not* being said, reading the emotions in the situation, and drawing out the best in

others (Lewis & Murphy, 2008). In addition, listening includes knowing one's own bias

in the conversation, being aware of what the listener is communicating. It is also the

responsibility of a good listener to determine the will of the group and to clarify that

through further communication (Spears, 2004). Hudson and Williamson (2002)

contended an inclusive, collaborative culture is strengthened by listening.

Empathy

Empathy is defined as "the capacity for participation in another's feelings or ideas"

(Woolf, 1979, p. 369). Leaders displayed empathy by trying to understand or show

compassion toward other staff members. Learning to empathize with others is

strengthened through "participation in another's feelings or ideas" by visualizing

another's situation or using mental imagery (Degraaf, Tilley, & Neal, 2004, p. 139).

Furthermore, Spears (2004) indicated an empathic person does not have to agree

with others but accept them for their own value and worth as people. Greenleaf (2008)

paired the words empathy and acceptance and reflected that the opposite of both words is

rejection, or "to refuse to hear or receive – to throw out" (p. 21). In addition, Autry

(2001) stated, "Acceptance is more important than approval" (p. 16). Servant leaders may

disagree with decisions but continue to empathize by respecting coworkers' unique

personality traits.

Healing

Healing is the act of mending broken spirits and hurts and replacing them with

wholeness, a powerful skill for the competent servant leader. Healing comes through

acceptance and through the form of listening (Autry, 2001; Crippen, 2005; Greenleaf,

2008; Spears, 2004). Wheatley (2002) stated, "The power of feeling heard is what heals

us….*I don't have to fix the person - I just have to really listen*" (p. 267). Gardiner (1998) agreed stating, "Quiet presence is an act of renewal" (p. 122).

Healing is paramount in any form of transformational leadership (Greenleaf, 2008; Spears, 2004). As the servant leader reaches out to heal, he may recognize that the motivation and greater need is for healing himself rather than others (Greenleaf; Sturnick, 1998). "There is something subtle communicated to one who is being served and led if, implicit in the compact between servant-leader and led, is the understanding that the search for wholeness is something they share" (Greenleaf, 2008, p. 37).

Awareness

Servant leadership demands a focus on awareness, particularly self-awareness (Crippen, 2005). Self-awareness helps leaders build and clarify their values. It opens one's eyes to the environment and situations of others. Greenleaf (2008) asserted, when purposefully aware of our surroundings, alertness is enhanced and "more is stored in the unconscious computer to produce intuitive insights in the future when needed" (p. 28). Yet, becoming aware of self and surrounding can be disturbing (Spears, 2004). Greenleaf stated,

> Awareness is not a giver of solace – it is just the opposite. It is a disturber and an awakener. Able leaders are usually sharply awake and reasonably disturbed. They are not seekers after solace. They have their own inner serenity. (p. 29)

Opening one's mind and becoming aware of the world around them, servant leaders enriched both their conscious and unconscious minds with resources for future decision making (Spears, 2004). As a leader, awareness creates the realization of when something

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is not working and planning may then be directed toward making a change. It gives the

leader a heightened ability to know what needs to be done next (Bennis, 2002).

Developing awareness is a constant cross-checking process between what we say and

what we do. It also involves listening to what others, such as mentors, tell us about

ourselves and our professional interactions (Crippen, 2005).

Persuasion

Persuasion has been described as "sharing reasons and rationale, making a strong

case for your position or desire while maintaining genuine respect for followers' ideas

and perspective…staying in the communication process until mutually beneficial and

satisfying outcomes are reached" (Covey, 1990. p. 107). Spears (2004) described

persuasion as seeking "to convince others rather than coerce compliance" (p. 14). The art

of persuasion includes listening, empathy, and acceptance (Autry, 2001; Bennis, 2002;

Degraaf, Tilley, & Neal, 2004; Greenleaf, 2008). In addition, "Persuasive power creates

opportunities and alternatives so individuals can choose and build autonomy. Coercive

power is used to get people to travel a predetermined path" (Showkeir, 2002, p. 153).

The term persuasion is closely linked with the word influence in leadership

terminology. Using persuasion and influence, servant leaders seek building consensus

within their coworkers (Burkhardt & Spears, 2004; Degraaf, Tilley, and Neal, 2004;

Greenleaf, 2008). Degraaf, Tilley, and Neal stated, "A bad leadership decision is more

likely to be changed by sound and persuasive argument, backed up by objective

information, than through confrontation" (p. 146). Throughout history, leaders have made

changes that have permeated schools, businesses, and communities by using "persistent

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persuasion" (Greenleaf, p. 30) to alter thoughts or direction, not usually with large groups, but rather convincing one person at a time.

Conceptualization

To define conceptualization, Spears (2002) stated, "Servant leaders seek to nurture their abilities to dream great dreams. The ability to look at a problem (or an organization) from a conceptualizing perspective means that one must think beyond day-to-day realities" (p. 6). Although leaders are taught to deal with complex problems by breaking things into small, manageable parts, servant leaders need the vision to effectively lead their organization toward a goal or "the bigger picture." Rather than focusing on short term, operational goals, the leader as conceptualizer is aware of broad-based concepts. The ability to conceptualize effectively relies upon the leader to pursue self-knowledge and lifelong learning with persistence to spark new understanding, new ideas, and new challenges (Bennis & Nanus, 1985).

Often organizations are without any clear vision and become lost in day-to-day management (Degraaf, Tilley, & Neal, 2004). It is appropriate to include trustees or boards at this level of planning. These leaders must have the insight and foresight to perceive the consequences of their decisions. Although building level leaders must perform daily tasks, they must also seek a balance with conceptualizing the long term vision (Crippen, 2005; Degraaf, Tilley, & Neal; Greenleaf, 2003; Spears, 2004).

Foresight

Foresight is closely related to conceptualization. Spears (2004) described foresight as "a characteristic that enables the servant-leader to understand the lessons from the past,

the realities of the present, and the likely consequences of a decision for the future" (p.

15). The leader with foresight is likely highly intuitive. Spears indicated that of the 10

characteristics of servant leadership, this it may be the one that is more innate rather than

learned.

Greenleaf (2008) purported that lack of foresight may be looked upon as an ethical

failure. Kim (2004) avowed,

> This would be true if we equated foresight with making accurate forecasts about the
>
> future (which is impossible to do). Fortunately for us, foresight is about being able
>
> to perceive *the significance and nature of events* before they have occurred (which
>
> is achievable). (p. 203)

Therefore, if a consequence or failure that has been labeled unethical was unforeseen and

not part of the leader's initial choice, it may be attributed to merely a lack of ability to

predict the future. Specht and Broholm (2004) encouraged leaders, frustrated from

negative outcome due to error in foresight, to then learn from hindsight and apply that

learning to future decisions rather than continue to carry the burden of negative

consequences.

To increase our ability to use foresight in a productive manner, Kim (2004)

encouraged continued expansion of our perception and awareness rather than keeping our

focus narrow and strictly logical. He suggested that we look beyond our own experiences,

cultivate the capacity to see things unseen and delve deeper "to grasp the inner or hidden

nature of things" (Kim, p. 209). He also indicated when we perceive or see what others

don't see, we must continue to focus on that vision, even when others disagree.

Stewardship

Stewardship is defined by Merriam-Webster online (2010) as "the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one's care." Spears (2004) continued, "Servant-leadership, like stewardship, assumes first and foremost a commitment to serving the needs of others" (p. 15). Good stewards make decisions within the context of that which is good for the greater society, not just immediate or isolated, but for the future and for everyone who might be affected. Leaders without the focus of stewardship are constantly looking out for what is in it for them (Covey, 1990).

In addition, stewards develop a sense that their time, talent, money, and even relationships are of value in the greater cause. DePree (1989) stated, "The art of leadership requires us to think about the leader-as-steward in terms of relationship: of assets and legacy, of momentum and effectiveness, of civility and values" (p. 13). Leaders must assure that stewardship is part of the mission of a school or business and decisions are guided by sustainability, viability, and legitimate needs of stakeholders (Covey, 1990; Specht & Broholm, 2004).

Commitment to Growth of People

"The servant-leader is deeply committed to the growth of each and every individual within the institution" (Spears, 2002, p. 15). The servant-leader recognizes that each person in his organization has worth beyond his work contributions and does everything possible to help all employees develop their personal, professional, and spiritual abilities to reach their potential as a contributing member of society. Greenleaf (2008) asserted, "An institution starts on a course toward people-building with leadership that has a firmly

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established context of *people first*. With that, the right actions fall naturally into place"

(p. 41).

The servant leader realizes the development of people is one of her highest callings

and the success of the organization is recognized through the efforts of those people

(Maxwell, 1993). Furthermore, Maxwell asserted that "leaders who continue to grow

personally and bring growth to their organizations will influence many and develop a

successful team around them" (p. 180). In addition, Spears (2002) listed some of the steps

leaders may follow in the development of staff: (a) providing necessary funds for and

making professional development opportunities available, (b) taking personal interest in

ideas and taking suggestions from everyone, and (c) encouraging worker involvement in

decision making.

Building Community

Paralleling commitment to growth of people is the commitment to bringing people

together as a community. Servant leaders work to build community within their work

environment by bringing people together and encouraging them to become involved in a

common cause (Autry, 2001). Spears (2004) asserted that much of the feeling of

community has been lost in recent years as we have moved from a society filled with

small, family-oriented businesses and organizations to larger, less personal institutions.

Greenleaf (2008) stated,

 All that is needed to rebuild community as a viable life form for large numbers of

 people is for enough servant-leaders to show the way, not by mass movements, but

by each servant-leader demonstrating his own unlimited liability for a quite specific

community-related group. (p. 40)

Bringing people together and building successful teams within a working

community increases the productivity and accountability of an institution. Lencioni

(2002) stated, "There is nothing like the fear of letting down respected teammates that

motivates people to improve their performance" (p. 213). Furthermore, the feeling of

community will increase retention of employees and the likelihood that the collective

goals will be met.

In summary, Spears (2002) indicated this list of 10 characteristics of servant leaders

is not all inclusive. Likewise, servant leaders, like all leaders, will have strengths in some

areas and continue to work on growth in other areas. However, the "list serves to

communicate the power and promise that this concept offers to those who are open to its

invitation and challenge" (p. 8). Recognition of the value of servant leadership, like

transformative leadership, is growing in the business and educational world. As new,

rigorous demands are placed on school leaders, servant leadership may be an answer to

building stronger, more productive teachers, students, and schools.

<div align="center">Criticisms of Servant Leadership</div>

Weak Leadership

Leadership theories are not without their critics. In a report by Wong and Davey

(2007), research indicated servant leadership has its detractors. Some of the common

criticisms included (a) people may perceive the servant leader's kindness as weakness

and take advantage, (b) servant leadership will not work in situations such as military

operations or prison systems where stakeholders are used to the "command and control style" (Wong & Davey, p. 5), and (c) it is too restrictive. They found detractors believed we need a variety of leadership qualities such as intuition, risk-taking, and courage.

Wong and Davey (2007) continued, "In the tough and tumble business world, even the term 'servant leader' sounds like an oxymoron. Many [CEOs] are afraid that they would be perceived as weak and indecisive, if they think and behave like a humble servant" (p. 4). These fears were apparent in the business and educational world, even at Christian-theory-based universities where proclamations of Jesus Christ as the first servant leader were studied (Wong and Davey). Bennis (2002) purported,

> Business schools, and education in general, have sometimes played down the value
>
> basis of leadership because it has to do with faith and personal values and belief
>
> systems. That threatens us. They should be the key attributes of leadership. (p. xiv)

Bennis further indicated that leaders need skills in finance, marketing, and other areas of expertise yet proclaimed those skills as "perishable" (p. xiv). Proponents of servant leadership supported the notion that character, values, and one's belief systems are the foundation that makes a leader successful (Autry, 2001; Bennis; Covey, 1990; Crippen 2005; Degraaf, Tilley, & Neal, 2004; Greenleaf, 2003; Maxwell, 1993; Spears, 2002; Spears, 2004).

Highlighting the converse of servant leadership, Wong and Page (2003) stated, "Individualism coupled with authoritarian hierarchy has proven to be a fertile ground for egotistical, arrogant leaders" (p. 8), and continued, "The presence of servant leadership is predicated on the absence of authoritarian hierarchy and egotistical pride" (p. 1). Wong

and Page revealed the need for a horizontal rather than hierarchical structure for the

servant leadership model to be used successfully. With many organizations, such as the

military and prison systems, using the "command and control" structure (Wong & Davey,

2007, p. 5), it is difficult to visualize inclusive, collaborative traits being utilized by their

leaders. Coercive power may be more effective with immature workers, who are either

not able or willing to take responsibility for their own behavior.

Loss of Power and Control

Another concern was that subordinates may use shared decision making against

their leaders. However, servant leaders, rather than giving up authority, develop the

ability to influence others through building relationships and connections (Autry, 2001;

Greenleaf, 2008; Hersey, Blanchard, & Natemeyer, 2001; Spears, 2002; Spears, 2004). In

addition, servant leaders can strengthen their potential to influence others through their

humility, vulnerability, authenticity, and genuineness when interacting with others

(Rinehart, 1998).

Much has been written on leadership and power (Autry, 2001; Bogle, 2004;

Burkhardt & Spears, 2004; Covey, 1990; Ferch, 2004; French & Raven, 2001; McGee-

Cooper & Trammell, 2002; Moxley, 2002; Showkeir; 2002 Yukl, 2006). French and

Raven (2001) divided power into five categories: (a) reward, (b) coercive, (c) legitimate,

(d) referent, and (e) expert. Hersey, Blanchard, and Natemeyer (2001) added connection

and information as additional types of power. It has been questioned whether humility

and power can coexist in a servant-led institution. Wong and Page (2003) stated the

concern of humility coexisting with power "can be easily resolved by recognizing that

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good leaders, including servant leaders, use a variety of social powers" (p. 2) in their day-to-day interactions, depending on the situation. They also cautioned coercive leaders in the use of power for controlling others by asserting, "their potential to attract and influence followers actually decreases in proportion to their attempt to control through intimidation, deception and manipulation" (p. 2).

Servant leadership, regardless of detractors, may be a viable form of leadership for schools of the 21st century. Servant leaders utilize characteristics that help to transform an organization or institution through the development of employees and by considering the needs of those around them. According to Greenleaf (2008), "the difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant – first to make sure that other people's highest priority needs are being served" (p. 15). The assessment of a servant leader's success may be decided by answering Greenleaf's question,

> Do those served grow as persons; do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? And what is the effect on the least privileged in society? Will they benefit or at least not be further deprived? (p. 15)

In summary, servant leadership, like all leadership styles, has its share of critics. The concerns shared by opponents include its appearance as a weak form of leadership and possibility of loss of power or control by the leaders. Specifically, "command and control" (Wong & Davey, 2007, p. 5) organizations were mentioned where it could be difficult for constituents to follow reforms lead by a servant leader.

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Servant Leaders and Spirituality

Although research mentioned spirituality and faith as a natural extension of servant leadership (Autry, 2001; Bennis; 2004; Bolman & Deal; 2001; Covey, 1991; Greenleaf, 2003; Spears, 2004; Wheatley, 2002), Fullan (2002) suggested that "spiritual leadership in education is an alluring but complex phenomenon" (p. 14). Bolman and Deal agreed that the challenge to merge spirituality and leadership is possibly the greatest challenge a leader will ever face; however, they suggested more leaders are referring to the "question posed by Jesus 2,000 years ago: What does it profit us if we gain the world but lose our souls?" (p. 5).

For Christians, servant leadership traits such as the desire to serve others, listening, healing, and helping others to grow, invoke thoughts of Jesus, the Son of God, and his teachings. However, spirituality is not confined to religion. Bolman and Deal (2001) indicated,

Some books approach spirituality in the context of a specific religion, such as Christianity, Judaism, or Buddhism. Some focus on a specific practice, such as meditation. Some are handbooks or primers offering suggestions and guidelines for adding spiritual depth to one's life. But almost all focus on soul and spirit. (p. 9)

Wheatley (2002) viewed spirituality as "an awareness that people have something beyond the instrumental or the utilitarian. People have deep yearnings, a quest for meaning, and an ability to wonder" (p. 246). Doohan (2007) asserted, "spiritual leadership…is motivated by everything that one holds dear in the depths of his or her

own heart as the result of a personal experience that has changed one's life and way of living it in the future" (p. 281). He later continued,

Spiritual leadership is not something you add on to an already existing leadership style; rather it permeates every thing that one does, whether at home, in social life, or at work. The best leaders are the ones who are grounded in motivating values and have "faith," and they live differently as a result of it. (p. 282)

One component of spirituality is "inner work." Wheatley (2004) suggested, "any process by which you withdraw from the world and focus on your own inner grounding is useful….People of any religious order know the value of a routine to one's practice, whether it's daily liturgy or a daily practice" (p. 260). Autry supported this by referring to the need for mediation to help leaders to get beyond their ego, correct mistakes, and learn from others regardless of their positional power. He stated, "In order to get out of the ego you have to somehow get deeper into your own inner life. And I think you do that through the spiritual disciplines of silence and prayer and meditation" (p. 56). Doolan (2007) suggested that leaders have strengthened their spirituality by making "the inward journey to discover self-identity, and this has made them more aware than ever of their own responsibility, vocation, and destiny in the world of leadership" (p. 283).

An additional trait of leaders who practice a life of spirituality is the effort they take in caring for those around them, both in their profession and daily lives. "Fostering the development of others and making a difference in their lives is the first order of spiritual leadership, and this is nourished by the quality of relationships between individuals" (Harris, Ballenger, & Jones, 2007 p. 4). A spiritual leader does this by "living with

integrity those values that are the basis of one's life, and making all decisions in the light of those values. There can never be a separation between life values and leadership practice" (Doolan, 2007, p. 283). The quality of leader and follower relationships relies on various ways of communicating genuine care toward others. The presence of a leader in the midst of the daily challenges is a powerful indication of empathy and a desire to bring people together for the common good. Wheatley (2002) asserted, "Just being with someone has become really important rather than saying the right phrase or the right word that will fix it" (p. 262).

In summary, Harris, Ballenger, and Jones (2007) stated, "Educational leaders must assess all actions, decisions, and ideas through a critical lens of spirituality, measured by the standards of ethical, moral, just, caring, equity, fairness, and democracy" (p. 4). In addition, Keith (2008) summarized,

> To thrive as a servant leader, you don't need symbols of success. You need to get material results for your organization, but you need spiritual returns for yourself. You need the personal meaning that will feed your spirit and your soul and give you deep happiness. You need the kind of happiness that cannot come from power, wealth, or fame. You need the happiness that can only come from a life of service. (p. 70)

<div align="center">Women in Leadership</div>

Research has identified multiple differences in leadership strategies of men and women (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Grogan, 2003; Harris, Ballenger, & Jones, 2007; Jamieson, 1995; Sherman, 2000). According to Sherman,

Identified female administrative strategies and orientations are quite different from

the traditional masculine model which includes the valuing of task orientation,

objectivity, independence and aggression. The elements of leadership that most

consistently inform a female administrative style include an emphasis on

establishing relationships with others in an attempt to build community, the

highlighting of their role as instructional leader, a recognition of the significance

that marginality plays in their daily work life and, finally, their ongoing struggle to

balance the demands of their public and private worlds. (p. 133)

In her research findings, Grogan (1996) reported that women (a) used alternative

approaches to leadership, (b) intertwined their personal and professional lives

inextricably, (c) were seen as women first and administrators second, (d) acted in a

variety of ways, and (e) resisted discouragement. In addition, preferences for democratic

rather than autocratic styles and organizations that are inclusive and collaborative are

readily recognized by women (Eagly, Karau, & Johnson, 1992; Irby & Brown, 1995;

Shakeshaft, 1987). The following section of literature review will focus on barriers,

strengths, and supports apparent to female leaders in administrative positions.

<div align="center">Barriers</div>

In addition to the use of alternative approaches to leadership, women recognize

barriers to leadership unique to their gender. Although barriers are encountered by

individuals of all races and gender, the current literature reflected common themes met by

women. The most prominent barriers included preference for traditional male leadership,

unfair hiring practices, personal demands, feelings of isolation, and attitudes of the

community. Following is a review of literature specific to those barriers.

Preferred Male Leadership Styles

Often heard is the saying, "It's a man's world." In education and business alike,

researchers agreed it is an "androcentric, male-centred society" (Sherman, 2000, p. 135),

and men are placed in position of authority because their historical reproductive

competitiveness has hard-wired them for aggression necessary for leading. Therefore,

women must be better prepared, be more knowledgeable and have stronger credentials

than their male counterpart to be seen as effective leaders (Gardella & Haynes, 2004;

Harris, Ballenger, & Jones, 2007; Jamieson, 1995).

According to Eagly and Carli (2007), Harris, Ballenger, and Jones (2007), and

Logan (1998), men are more associated with leadership traits and rights whereas women

are associated with compassionate traits, lacking masculine personality characteristics

that would otherwise allow them to be effective leaders. Although Jablonski (1996)

purported, "Our expectations for leadership by women need to be congruent with

expectations of leadership by men" (p. 249), Sherman (2000) stated, "Remaining true to

women's ways of doing things rather than attempting to assume a male orientation" (p.

142) was of importance to women in leadership positions and the schools they led.

Furthermore, Jablonski (1996) and Jamieson (1995) asserted that in gender studies,

women leaders appear to point to the use of participative, collaborative styles with

strengths in interpersonal care and concern for one another. Additionally, Sherman

(2000) stated, "An in-depth look at difference in leadership styles reveals that men and

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women vary in the areas of leadership and management, work environment, communication style, decision-making and conflict resolution" (p. 137). Yet, she continued, "difficulty arises not in the identification of difference, but in the recognition, legitimization and implementation of these preferred modes of leadership within current school leadership practices" (p. 133).

Hiring Practices

Fundamental changes in the status for women in leadership require the examination of hiring practices. Gardella and Haynes (2004) stated, "Formal policies may have discriminatory effects when qualifications for hiring or promotion, such as seniority or previous experience are not necessary to succeed in the job" (p. 48). In school administration programs, the percentage of female students now outnumbers the male students; yet the number of men employed as school administrators far outweigh the number of women (Eckman, 2004). Demanding policies that require fair and equitable recruitment is critical. Logan stated,

> Equal access in hiring practices for qualified school administrator candidates can be advanced through information and training for school council and school board members; through a relevant, rigorous administrative preparation program appropriate for the context of today's schools; and through continuous efforts to focus public attention on respect for diversity and desirable leadership skills for schools. (p. 5)

Advertising positions widely and encouraging qualified applicants, including females, must be included in human resource policies (Sherman, 2000).

Furthermore, deeply imbedded hiring practices, or "deep structure" (Rao, Rieky, & Kelleher, 1999, p. 2) which may not be visible, such as values and history, are a hindrance in hiring female leaders. Women leaders fall victim to the "good old boy" routine that promotes male friends or relatives to fill administrative vacancies, disallowing women the opportunity to interview or have equal opportunity for promotion (Harris, Ballenger, & Jones, 2007).

Personal Demands

Traditional childcare and home-making responsibilities of women outside work continue to plague female leaders and deplete the time and energy they have to dedicate toward their jobs. Women are often the ones who interrupt their careers for child bearing, take more days off due to family demands, and work part time. Due to their family responsibilities, women delay their entry into school administration (Eckman, 2004). Burke (2002) noted with the either/or standard of personal/professional roles, family commitments are seen as a liability for women.

Furthermore, the roles women assume outside of their employment decreased opportunities for experience and promotion (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Orenstein, 2000). In addition, according to Orenstein, women consider the reality of their roles outside of work when charting their professional goals, assuming family responsibilities will require flexibility in their employment. Harris, Ballenger, and Jones (2007) stated, "Seven out of ten women surveyed indicated that they expected their spouses' jobs to take priority over theirs" (p. 2). Therefore, women began their careers fully recognizing the importance of their roles as help-mate and stabilizing factor in their families.

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Although women leaders may voluntarily accept these limitations, they are barriers that limit full realization of their leadership potential in the workforce. It was also noted that "women who chose either their work first or their significant relationships first had a lower level of role conflict than did the women who felt a need to commit to both work and significant relationships equally" (Eckman, 2004, p.369). Kelly (1997) summarized that many women leaders resolved the conflict of role commitment by remaining single and focused on their jobs or becoming superwomen committed to both family and career.

Community Attitudes and Isolation

Cultural stereotyping and cultural perceptions of leadership have kept women in the classroom, limiting their goal orientation (Harris, Ballenger, & Jones, 2007). Societal expectations of wife and mother potentially influenced younger women to stay in positions that require less time commitment outside the home (Eckman, 2004). In addition, media has been cited as a barrier, driving the perception that women do not have the desire to acquire leadership positions (Eagly & Carli, 2007).

Furthermore, women leaders often report feelings of being alone (Gardella & Haynes, 2004; Russell 1995; Sherman, 2000). This may be a factor of time and distance in rural areas and also an issue of fewer women in administration with whom to share and collaborate. Aloneness is also exacerbated when women describe the feeling of being "invisible" at meetings. Male led administrative meetings are often described as top-down, a dissemination of information where women feel ignored and isolated from discussion (Gardella & Haynes; Sherman). Feelings of invisibility increased when ideas, initially presented by women, become credible only after they are restated or promoted

by the male members of the gathering. Although women believe they can speak at male dominated meetings, some choose to remain silent, believing their comments are neither considered nor pursued. Finally, Gardella and Haynes indicated "organizations with the illusion of marginality develop separate career tracks for women" (p. 109).

In summary, women face multiple barriers to obtaining and maintaining positions in school administration. Inequitable hiring practices, the preference to having a traditional male figurehead, personal demands, attitudes of the community, and isolation create barriers toward realizing their potential as leaders. While there has been some advancement in recognizing and reducing these challenges, more work is still to be done.

<div align="center">Strengths</div>

Research indicated that some of the most common traits attributed to female leaders are also considered strong leadership traits, particularly in the school setting (Hudson & Williamson, 2002). Mulvey (2009) stated,

> The 21st century is becoming the era of the woman. The feminization of our schools and other learning organizations has placed females in a role of increasing achievement….Women have begun to use their own strengths in leadership to excel in… education institutions competing with men. (p. 34)

The following section will review the literature about the themes commonly noted as strengths in leadership styles of women: (a) collaboration and community building, (b) communication style, (c) instructional leadership, and (d) nurturing.

Collaboration and Building Community

In research completed by Harris, Ballenger, and Jones (2007), women indicated building community as one of their strengths. They stressed, "Developing a sense of community was a guiding, passionate vision that grew out of an almost spiritual desire to bring people together. The goal in every case was to make education better for children" (p. 7). Harris, Ballenger, and Jones further suggested that community building was achieved through empowering others and developing collegial and collaborative teams within their building. Community and team building encompassed parents, staff, and community members at large as well as building and district employees (Shakeshaft, 1987). Although community building is time consuming, it develops stronger coalitions that strengthen the resolve in positive growth (Jablonski, 1996). Cultivating relationships was seen not only as a way of building community but a way of life with the process being as important as results (Gardella & Haynes, 2004).

Communication Style

Women perceived themselves to be excellent communicators (Sherman, 2000). Female leaders used communication to promote positive relationships between staff, students, and community members (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Furthermore, women used language that was more tentative and conditional in a deliberate effort to give others a voice and invite them into the conversation (Hudson & Williamson, 2002). In addition, Sherman posited that women described themselves with strong ability to "articulate the vision of the school and to interact with teachers, parents, supervisors and community leaders" (p. 139). However, it should be noted that in male dominated meetings, "senior

women…still lose out by not speaking up; they hang back if they think that they have nothing new to say or that their ideas fall short of profound" (Barsh, Cranston, & Craske, 2008, p. 46).

Instructional Leadership

Women in school leadership continue to incorporate teaching into their administrative duties and are instrumental in instructional learning (Shakeshaft, 1987). In addition, women are likely to know their students and achievement levels even after they are working outside the classroom. Harris, Ballenger, and Jones (2007) asserted that women leaders spend more years in the classroom than men, often waiting until their mid-forties to enter administration.

It was important for women to continue sharing what they learned in the classroom with staff, particularly with those in the beginning stages of their career (Sherman, 2000). Sherman also stated "women are concerned about more holistic issues and the way to affect the children" (p. 137). In addition to creating a school climate more conducive to learning, Shakeshaft (1987) reported "academic achievement is higher in schools and districts in which women are administrators" (p. 4). Sharing time in the classroom improving student learning as an instructional leader was significant to female school administrators.

Nurturing

Research indicated that women leaders identified more closely with traditional female characteristics such as nurturing and focused on caring for their staff by supporting their pursuit of personal and professional development (Sherman, 2000).

Nurturing is commonly linked to terms such as "empowerment" or "enabling" (Jablonski, 1996, p. 245). One female school principal in Sherman's study summed up her approach stating "our power is in our nurturing" (p. 138). Nurturing as a strength for women in leadership surfaced throughout research and is looked upon as a desirable leadership trait regardless of gender (Logan, 1998; Shakeshaft, 1987). It is seen through service, caring, and developing relationships. These strengths, shown most commonly in female leaders, are also traits that would be considered positive for any school leader, regardless of gender or race.

In summary, the research pointed to various strengths women leaders used as they succeeded in obtaining and maintaining their administrative positions. Communication, collaboration, and community building were repeatedly noted, buttressed by nurturing and the desire to stay involved with instructional leadership. These leadership traits varied with individual styles and were also attributed to successful male school administrators.

<center>Supports</center>

Throughout the research literature, studies point to a need for better support systems to sustain women in their leadership roles (Logan, 1998; Shakeshaft, 1987). Women have been interviewed regarding what and who have supported their pursuits in leadership. Common emergent themes included having other women as friends or mentors, a supportive nuclear and extended family, support by male leaders, and implementation of flexible work hours (Eagly& Carli, 2007; Harris, Ballenger & Jones,

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2007; Logan; Shakeshaft). This final section regarding the literature about women in leadership will review these support systems.

Women Mentors and Networking

Women leaders indicated they benefited from having mentors, particularly women role models as mentors. According to Eagly and Carli (2007) and Logan (1998), companies that avoid having sole female leaders discourage tokenism and increase the probability of success for women leaders. Ensuring a critical mass of women in administrative positions increases the likelihood of women being heard and, therefore, opens doors to promotion. Harris, Ballenger, and Jones (2007) indicated that women in leadership could "support other talented women by placing them in positions of greater power and authority" (p. 8). Logan supported this argument by stating, "As more women become principals and superintendents, support strategies should be redirected toward helping those who enter the field succeed and advance" (p. 5). Mentors can help less experienced staff plan their careers, set goals, and identify areas for further training (Gardella & Haynes, 2004). Mentors can also promote their mentees by highlighting their accomplishments and assisting them in garnering visible assignments that magnify their skills. Those with strong mentoring or networking relationships realized higher pay, more promotions, and greater career satisfaction (Barsh, Cranston, & Craske, 2008). Unfortunately, with fewer numbers of women in senior management positions, the supply of female mentors does not meet the demands (Gardella & Haynes).

Parallel to mentoring, networking was a strong support system for leaders. Gardella and Hayes (2004) stated, "Alliances with community and professional leaders improved

the women's standing in their own organizations and opened opportunities for advancement" (p.126). With advances in technology, networking has taken on new dimensions such as communication by email, blogging, and immediate access to professional resources and is particularly important to those in remote regions where personal contact is limited (Logan 1998).

Family Support

Family and spousal support played an integral role in the decision for women to pursue and continue in school leadership positions. As reported by Harris, Ballenger, and Jones (2007), "Eserati (1983) found that 90% of women would not even consider relocating unless their husbands found jobs" (p. 2) in the same area. Further research by Harris, Ballenger, and Jones indicated, "Families sacrificed, yet, by and large, the women were supported in their quest to become leaders" (p. 7). According to a study by Eckman (2004), female high school principals were more likely to be hired closer to home in their own district than male principals. This was buttressed by indications that support from their spouse and family at their current jobs was critical to their success. Familial support also came from extended family including mothers and grandmothers.

Promotion by Male Leaders

When a highly respected male administrator or key leader takes an interest in mentoring a female colleague, she is more likely to be noticed and experience an increase in her social capital (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Harris, Ballenger, & Jones, 2007). However, caution must be used as "colleagues may view male-female mentoring relationships with suspicion, imagining sexual overtones or favoritism" and "women may feel vulnerable to

sexual harassment or abuse of power" (Gardella & Haynes, 2004, p. 50). Real or

perceived sexual politics between women and their male mentors make it difficult for

women to find male mentors. In addition, Shakeshaft (1987) stated "acting like a man

may not be the best strategy for a woman and worse, may interfere with the goals of

schooling" (p. 6).Therefore, the decision for women to rely solely on a male mentor must

be weighed against the potential negative effects (Barsh, Cranston, & Craske, 2008).

Flexibility at Work

Eagly and Carli (2007) asserted women should work toward changing the long

hour norms in their organization and establish family-friendly human resources practices.

These changes have shown to increase the proportion of women in management. In

opposition, Gardella and Haynes (2004) caution that alternative career tracks for women

choosing to work fewer hours result in lower pay and less opportunity for advancement.

Employees with family responsibilities must be given more time to prove their

skills and abilities. Eckman (2004) stated, "It is important to consider ways to provide

family-friendly workplace policies that will allow… principals, regardless of gender, to

balance their personal and professional roles" (p. 384). Flexibility in work hours and

balance between personal and professional responsibilities continued to be a struggle for

women.

In summation, women in administrative positions have indicated they could not

have done it alone. Critical to their success has been the support of other women as role

models and mentors. In addition, many credit their success to supportive partners and

understanding children. Less frequently mentioned, yet still a significant factor, was the

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support of superiors who were established, recognized males. Women stated the support and recognition by these successful, high profile men had expedited their advancement within their school or business. Likewise, districts or companies with flexible work schedules that allowed women to create some balance in their personal lives and provide care to their families helped to encourage and support female leaders.

In *Advancing Women in Leadership*, Logan (1998) summarized,

If equity in employment, advancement, and retention of highly qualified school leadership is where we want to go, we must rethink and reactivate a plan to get there. Conditions are right to adapt, adjust and advance the cause of equity and quality. Change is underway but we cannot rest. The job is not done. (p. 6)

Women continue to face challenges and barriers in their efforts toward advancement in school leadership. Commonly noted barriers included unfair hiring practices, preference for a male in leadership positions, family and personal demands on women, feelings of isolation, and attitudes of community members toward women in leadership. However, women brought a specific set of strengths to their positions including a strong ability to communicate and bring the community together, both inside and outside of the school setting. In addition, women appeared to be particularly strong at instructional leadership and in nurturing staff and students by empowering and enabling them to grow.

To assist with overcoming promotional barriers, research also identified support systems for female administrators. Mentors were important to women in paving the way toward leadership positions. In conjunction with mentoring, networking, whether in person on electronically, enhanced women's jobs and reduced their feelings of isolation.

Women also realized promotion more quickly when assisted by men in superior positions who recognized their strengths and placed them in more visible roles. Lastly, flexible work hours and recognition of family needs assisted women in finding balance in their personal and professional lives.

<center>School Culture</center>

Culture is an often overlooked and critical element of development of a successful school (Patterson, 2000). Merriam-Webster online (2010) defines culture as "the characteristic features of everyday existence…as a way of life shared by people in a place or time." Furthermore, Schein (1985) defined culture as,

> …a pattern of basic assumptions invented, discovered, or developed by a given group as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration that has worked well enough to be considered valid and therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems. (p. 9)

Culture is always evolving and is influenced by various complex interactions between events, people, and other circumstances (Fullan, 2001; Morgan, 1977). Sergiovanni (2005) defined the concept of culture as the importance of ideology, shared values, and norms for behavior. Hoy (1990) stated, "The notion of organizational culture is also clearly an attempt to capture the feel, sense, character or ideology of the organization, but brings with it conceptual complexity" (p. 156). The culture of schools is shaped by the students, staff, teachers, and leaders both at the building and central office levels (Honig & Copland, 2008). Members of community and school board also play a

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significant role in the direction of the school as they allocate funds and vote on school bond issues.

Within the school building, culture becomes obvious through not only the physical plant but also the organization, mission, vision, and celebrations of what the staff and students value (Hoy, 1990). When one walks into a truly excellent school, you can see and feel the culture through the interactions of the staff and students, the items and awards that hang on the walls or are displayed in trophy cases, and the demeanor in which the students move about the hallways (Franey, 2002; Wren, 1999). The students display a level of confidence and sense of purpose that indicates they know why they are there and are partners in the mission to learn and grow. Although educational achievement is the focus, the atmosphere is one of collegiality and support. It is obviously a welcoming place where one wants to be (Jerald, 2006).

Organization

Deal and Peterson (1999) indicated that a strong, affirmative culture "plays a dominant role in exemplary performance" (p.2). Several benefits of such a culture included increased productivity, optimal collaborative environment with enhanced communication, support of improvement efforts, building community and encouraging students and staff to identify with the school, and a focus on behavior and what is valued (Deal & Peterson; Winterman, 2008). Behind the shaping of school culture is team effort rather than teachers following the direction of one individual reformer (Winterman). In addition, development of the school's direction through vision and mission should be driven by those in the classroom who can readily identify the school's culture (Banks,

2004). Griffith (1997, 1998, 2000) purported that school goal attainment should be based on the strengths and needs of students and that students play as significant a role as teachers in the development of school culture.

Conversely, negative outcomes affect schools that do not display a strong, positive culture. Several of those aspects may include students who are reluctant to challenge teachers due to a culture of rigidity and, in opposition, difficulties for students who are unclear about standards and expectations in a school culture lacking a behavioral code of ethics (Wren, 1999). In addition, staff may contribute negatively to the school culture through passive resistant behaviors. Teachers who outwardly agree with programs or processes yet fail to follow through in their classroom silently demonstrate resistance (Winterman, 2008). These examples of informal and formal school cultural issues are often subtle and difficult to observe; however, they impact student learning, employee satisfaction, and overall school success.

Although extra-curricular activities are an integral part of high achieving schools, allowing them to define and dominate the culture can depress the learning atmosphere. Likewise, in middle and high school environments, negative social peer factions may define the direction of the culture and derail the most well-intentioned mission. Therefore, school leaders, principals, and head teachers, play a vital role in shaping the direction and atmosphere of their school and must address these often silent, underlying issues (Winterman, 2008).

Mission, Vision, and Values

Mission, vision, and values are all important to the culture of any school. To undergird a strong, positive culture a vision and mission must be in place (Jerald, 2006). Collins and Porras (1996) indicated vision should include both core purpose or ideology and an envisioned future. "The vision of serving and enriching the lives of others is what a culture ought to be" (Sanders, 2009, p. 31). According to Yukl (2005), to enhance school culture the vision statement should be brief rather than complex and challenging yet realistic.

In addition to a vision, school may elect to design a mission statement. Mission statements are usually focused on the activities to be performed by staff and students whereas "vision tells you not only what the organization does, but why it is worthwhile and exciting to do it" (Yukl, 2005, p. 296). The mission of a school is carried out on a daily basis and includes many of the behaviors that undergird the school's culture by silently depicting the way things are done in the building. Using the vision statement as a guide, strategic objectives are defined in steps toward reaching goals. How the teachers reach those goal may be directed or left up to the individual teacher. However, the building will function as a unit with purpose if all staff members keep the building mission at the forefront of their daily activities (Collins & Porras, 1998; Deal & Peterson, 1999; Fullan, 2001; Jerald, 2006).

To support the vision and mission of a school, the leadership team should create value statements that staff consider important to their school. Yukl (2005) stated that "values usually pertain to treatment of customers, treatment of organization members,

core competencies and standards of excellence" (p. 296). In addition, Collins and Porras (1996) stated, "Core values are the essential and enduring tenets of an organization. A small set of timeless guiding principles, core values require no external justification; they have intrinsic value and importance to those inside the organization" (p. 66). It is important to the school culture that leadership and staff are clear about what matters most in the hierarchy of values and continue to be value driven rather than event driven. Role modeling those values and gaining feedback from stakeholders is critical to the continued development of building level culture (Patterson & Kelleher, 2007).

The Principal's Role

As site based management becomes more popular, school leaders must take a more active role in developing their building's culture. Wren (1999) stated "to have a more complete picture of their schools, administrators need to become cognizant of the almost imperceptible yet powerful influence of institutional culture" (p. 593). The principal must first become aware of the symbols of the implicit curriculum and closely examine the school rules, ceremonies, rituals, and routines. At times, these are so subtle they are difficult to identify (Morgan, 1977). The strong school leader accurately assesses her building for past and current realities. Implicit routines that have been in place for years must be evaluated for their current impact (Morgan; Patterson & Kelleher, 2007).

Leadership style may have a direct impact on developing school culture. While the authoritarian leader may be more directive and lead with a coercive power (Yukl, 2005), the servant leader focuses on nurturing the strengths of staff members to develop contributing teacher leader teams (Franey, 2002). Finegan (2000) stated "When an

organization is perceived by an employee to be concerned about his/her welfare, the

employee is likely to be affectively committed…overall, the best predictor of

commitment is the perception of their work environment" (p. 167). Pollard also (2003)

contended,

> History has taught us that there is a definite association between the individual
>
> character of the leaders of a society and the collective well-being of those who are
>
> being lead. Plato suggested that if the leaders of a society were not people of
>
> character, there would be social disintegration. (p. 27)

Finally, Patterson and Kelleher (2007) encouraged leaders to expect adversity yet

stay focused on their mission and values. As a servant leader, the characteristics of

awareness, conceptualization, and foresight must be utilized. They maintained it is also

critical for leaders to stay cognizant of their personal energy, to renew themselves

periodically and connect with spirit-driven purposes beyond themselves.

In summary, the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2002* holds schools increasingly

accountable in student achievement and has demanded that schools increase student

learning though scientific based educational programs. Highly effective schools not only

focus on academics but include an atmosphere that goes beyond a safe and orderly

teaching environment. Research suggested school leaders who maintain a strong, positive

culture are more likely to reap the rewards of high academic achievement (Deal &

Peterson, 1999; Hoy, 1990; Jerald, 2006; Winterman, 2008). Several additional benefits

of such a culture include increased productivity, an optimal collaborative environment

with enhanced communication, support for improvement efforts, building community,

encouraging students and staff to identify with the school, and a focus on what is valued (Deal & Peterson; Winterman). Conversely, negative outcomes affect schools that do not display strong, positive culture (Wren, 1999).

Mission, vision, and values are all important to the culture of any school. According to Yukl (2005), the school's vision should be brief rather than complex, challenging yet realistic and "leaders must demonstrate commitment to the vision by their decisions and behavior" (p. 268). It is important to the school culture that leadership and staff are clear about what matters most in the hierarchy of values and continue to be value driven rather than event driven (Patterson & Kelleher, 2007).

Finally, leadership style may have a direct impact on developing school culture. Researchers concluded it is important that leaders include stakeholders, including students and staff, in developing school culture so that it is embedded and becomes part of the daily routine (Yukl, 2005). Leaders where students are expected to achieve at high levels must be intentional about promoting a positive school culture (Collins & Porras, 1998; Deal & Peterson, 1999; Fullan, 2001; Jerald, 2006).

<div align="center">Summary</div>

The literature reviewed explored leadership theory with a focus on servant leadership and women leaders. The characteristics of servant leadership as well as barriers, strengths, and supports of women as leaders were investigated in depth. Finally, culture and the impact of leadership on school culture were reviewed.

The literature revealed that within the last several decades there has been a shift in the structural and administrative needs of schools. This shift is found in the organization,

roles, relationships, and responsibilities of educational leaders (Crippen, 2005; Lewis & Murphy, 2008). Leadership is becoming less hierarchal and more democratic as research points toward the need for collaborative, transformative efforts among leaders and teachers to promote long term, sustainable growth in schools (Leithwood & Duke, 1999; Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 2000; Lewis & Murphy, 2008; Maxwell, 1993). Leaders are adapting to this change by bringing more of a collaborative culture to their buildings. Several leadership styles readily lend themselves to these changes, particularly those with transformational leadership qualities.

Servant leadership is a form of transformative leadership. Robert K. Greenleaf (2008), developer of the concept of servant leadership, stated a servant leader "wants to serve, to serve *first*. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead" (p. 15). The servant leader's goal is to "first to make sure that other people's highest priority needs are being served" (p. 15). It is the intention of the servant leader to empower those being led to grow into "healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous" persons who will likely then choose to become servants (p. 15). Spears (2002, 2004), former CEO of the Robert Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership, has conducted extensive explorations of the characteristics of servant leaders and developed a list of 10 characteristics that are prominent in servant leaders. This list of characteristics was not all inclusive but foundational in those growing in servant leadership.

In addition, the review of women in leadership revealed women may naturally exhibit characteristics of servant leadership. Women as school administrators report strengths in the areas of communication, collaboration, community building, and

nurturing (Jablonski, 1996; Jamieson, 1995). Furthermore, as more women become school leaders, the literature disclosed the barriers and supports they may encounter in their administrative positions. The barriers included preferred male leadership styles, unfair and inequitable hiring practices, personal demands outside the work place, and community attitudes about women as leaders (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Harris, Ballenger, & Jones, 2007). Women in leadership positions were also aware of supports that had helped them obtain and maintain their positions. Those supports included a supportive spouse and extended family, mentors, networking with other professionals, and flexibility in work hours (Barsh, Cranston, & Craske, 2008; Gardella & Haynes, 2004).

Finally, school culture was important to students, teachers, community members, and school leaders. Highly effective schools not only focused on academics but included an atmosphere that goes beyond a safe and orderly teaching environment. Several benefits of a positive culture included increased productivity, an optimal collaborative environment with enhanced communication, support of improvement efforts, building community, encouraging students and staff to identify with the school, and a focus on what is valued (Deal & Peterson, 1999; Winterman, 2008).

Following the Chapter Two literature review, Chapter Three outlines the research methodology, including the selection process for the servant leader for this study. It also defines the selection process for participants and describes how data is collected and analyzed. Chapter Four focuses on data analysis and research findings, while Chapter Five discusses findings, the limitations of the study, and implications for further research.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The 21st century brought with it increased accountability from federal, state, and

local governance toward public school improvement and performance. School districts

are challenged to find the most effective administrators to lead their schools. Although

academic improvement is a basic benchmark, positive school culture is also an important

facet of successful schools. Therefore, public school districts continue to seek

knowledgeable instructional leaders who also promote positive school culture making

school a place where staff and students want to be and are willing to learn (Cooper,

Ponder, Merritt, & Matthews, 2005).

Currently, no one leadership theory or style has proven to be key in increasing

student performance and developing a positive school culture. However, research on

school leadership indicated an increased need for transformational leaders who are good

listeners, authentic, and have the ability to build community within their building through

a collaborative process (Fullan, 2001; Lewis & Murphy, 2008). Servant leadership, a

form of transformational leadership, promotes characteristics that encourage leaders to

seek to serve the needs of others and, in the process, develop those around them to rise

above their own needs and work toward the good of all.

Furthermore, the research on women as school leaders continues to increase.

Research indicated there remains a lack of support for women in their endeavors as

leaders (Sherman, 2000). There is a continuing need to investigate behaviors and traits of

women in leadership, particularly those that assist in overcoming the barriers particular to women.

<div align="center">Problem and Purpose Overview</div>

Research suggests there is no one "silver bullet" in school leadership theory or style (Grogan, 1996). With an under representation of women in school leadership, there was also a dearth of research to investigate leadership qualities related to women in administrative positions (Shakeshaft, 1987; Sherman, 2000). Although there is indication that transformational leadership qualities contribute in leading school improvement, little research has been completed on the effects of servant leadership in schools, particularly with women as servant leaders. Furthermore, qualities identified as transformative, servant leadership traits, have traditionally been associated with women as leaders (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Shakeshaft; Sherman). Those qualities include nurturing, community building, collaboration and a desire to promote the growth of those around them. Although research indicated women leaders tend to work collaboratively and naturally display transformational characteristics of a servant leader, females continue to be underrepresented in public school leadership (Shakeshaft; Sherman).

The primary purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of behaviors of servant leadership, particularly demonstrated by a female school principal, on the staff and culture in a public school setting. Studying the reflections of the servant leader, and those employees most closely involved with the servant leader, through purposeful questioning, observations, and artifact review served as basis for the investigation.

Knowledge gained from this study will provide information for those seeking to grow in servant leadership qualities and for women investigating leadership characteristics.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study.

1. How is servant leadership exhibited by a female leader in a public school setting?

2. How do stakeholders in a public school setting describe a female servant leader?

3. How does servant leadership manifest itself in the culture of the public education setting?

Population and Sample

Merriam (1998) purported, "Once the general problem has been identified, the task becomes to select the unit of analysis, the sample," and "the two basic types of sampling are probability and nonprobability sampling" (p. 60). She further stated, "Since generalization in a statistical sense is not a goal of qualitative research, probabilistic sampling is not…justifiable in qualitative research" (p. 61). Therefore, nonprobability sampling is the method chosen by most qualitative researchers.

Qualitative case studies most often require the researcher to implement a minimum of two levels of sampling (Merriam, 1998). For the purposes of this study, three levels of nonprobability sampling were required. First, the researcher selected educational leaders who identified and recommended a servant leader for the focus of this study. Throughout the remainder of this study, these four leaders will be termed referent leaders. Once the

referent leaders assisted in selecting the servant leader to be studied, the volunteers to participate in the interview process were selected. The subjects in each sample, referent leaders, servant leader, and staff participants, were purposefully selected using "criterion-based selection" (Merriam, p. 61). Criterion-based selection, the most common form of "purposeful sampling" (Merriam, p. 61), allowed the researcher to select subjects from which the most can be learned. "Purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight" (Merriam, p. 61). Therefore, selection of the referent leaders, the servant leader to be studied, and faculty volunteers for this case study was purposeful and criterion-based.

To implement "criterion-based selection" (Merriam, 1998, p. 61) for this study, a defining list of characteristics was created. The criteria reflected the purpose of the study and assisted in answering the questions posed by the researcher. The researcher then located participants who fulfilled the criteria on the list. The rationale for the characteristics used in the selection criteria were clearly aligned with the purpose of the study and assisted the researcher in selecting "information-rich" participants (Merriam, p. 62) or those with the greatest amount of knowledge of the case.

Initially, two lists of characteristics were developed to identify both the referent leaders and, subsequently, the subject of this case study. The referent leaders were those selected to refer a potential servant leader subject for the case study. As referent leaders, the researcher chose four educational leaders from the Midwest. Using "criterion-based selection" (Merriam, 1998, p. 61), the four referent leaders were chosen because of their expertise and experience in the field of education and, upon completion of a career in

public school education, their continued involvement in academic leadership. Each of these leaders was a career public school educator, with 10 or more years experience in public school administration, and currently employed in other areas of education or service. The researcher used the selected criteria to ensure the likelihood the referent leaders would have worked alongside or been supervisors of potential servant leaders. Their descriptions follow: (a) a retired public school superintendent currently employed as a college instructor, (b) a retired public school superintendent currently serving as state representative, (c) a retired public school superintendent currently employed as a director with Missouri Regional Professional Development Center, and (d) a retired assistant superintendent and human resources officer currently employed as a college instructor.

The referent leaders were then presented with the list of 10 attributes of servant leadership and asked if they could refer a current or recently retired school administrator who exemplified the 10 characteristics of servant leadership. Three of the four leaders replied with the name of the person chosen for this study. Although several other leaders were mentioned, the principal in this study was the only match mentioned by more than one of the individuals.

The principal selected was a female middle school principal at a Midwest public school with a student population of approximately 700 students. The principal, who will be given the pseudonym Mrs. Mary North, was recently retired from the public school setting after 33 years as a teacher, counselor, assistant principal, and principal. Her final seven years of employment were spent as a building-level principal, assisted by one vice

principal and two school counselors. Mrs. North's entire 33 years of public education were spent in the same Midwest school district.

To select the staff members to participate in the interviews regarding Mrs. North's characteristics, traits, and leadership behaviors, a list of staff members under her direct supervision was reviewed. "Criterion-based selection" (Merriam, 1998, p. 61) was used by selecting those members who had experienced a minimum of five years with Mrs. North as their leader. A school counselor, who had worked for Mrs. North, was consulted and assisted in further refining the list by purposefully selecting members who would be most familiar with her characteristics due to their knowledge and position within the building. The selection criteria, in addition to length of time serving under Mrs. North, was (a) school improvement team member, (c) department chairperson and (d) grade level chairperson. A final list of nine individuals was developed for participation in one-on-one interviews. In addition, seven staff members were selected to participate in a focus group interview. These seven members met the criteria of years of employment with Mrs. North as their supervisor and were a single grade level team that had worked closely with Mrs. North.

<div align="center">Rationale for Case Study</div>

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, there was widespread debate in the research community regarding the effectiveness of qualitative versus quantitative measures. By the end of the 1970s, there was a growing understanding of the use of qualitative methodology and its usefulness in understanding research in a deeper, richer way

(Heppner & Heppner, 2004; Merriam, 1998). Educational researchers must consider the information needed for their study and how best to gather that information.

Therefore, when selecting a research method, the problem and structure of the questions posed were considered. Patton (1997) proposed "the quantitative paradigm requires the variety of human experience to be captured along standardized scales" (p. 289) while "the qualitative paradigm pays particular attention to uniqueness, whether this be an individual's uniqueness or the uniqueness of program, community, home, or other unit of analysis" (p. 289). Merriam (1988) further stated, "Anchored in real life situations the case study results in a rich and holistic account of a phenomenon" (p. 32). Therefore, understanding women in servant leadership and the behaviors displayed required questions directed toward the phenomenon and holistic, unique qualities.

Qualitative studies are subjective, including the researcher as the primary instrument in conducting interviews, observations, and document collection (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). Merriam (1988) described a case study as "an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social unit" (p. 21). The purpose of a qualitative case study is to "seek to discover and understand a phenomenon, a process, or the perspectives and worldviews of the people involved" (Merriam, 1998, p. 11). Thick, rich descriptions and inductive strategies are employed in qualitative design. Questioning for qualitative research, directed toward *how*, *why*, and *what,* is subjective and open ended, encouraging "snowballing" (Krueger & Casey, 2000, p. 77), or extended answers that add depth to the data being collected.

Several types of qualitative studies are commonly used. A basic or generic study may define a process observed through reccurring patterns. It includes descriptions and understanding or interpretation. Case study research is intensive and in-depth, focusing on the description of a single person or situation such as an event or occurrence (Bassey, 2006; Hancock & Algozzine, 2006; Merriam, 1998). Phenomenology employs the researcher's personal knowledge of an event to discover the essence or basic configuration of that experience (Merriam).

Considering the questions and need for investigating the phenomenon of servant leadership, the qualitative, descriptive case study format was selected. Answering the questions of *how* is servant leadership defined, *how* do stakeholders in a public school setting describe a servant leader, and *how* does servant leadership manifest itself in the culture of a setting suggests research that focuses on an "intrinsically bound" case (Merriam, 1998, p. 27). Studying servant leadership in a single case study allowed the researcher to analyze complex phenomena in a deep, comprehensive way by focusing on a particular person, what her behaviors and interaction reveal, and what these represent. Merriam supported the choice for a single case study by stating, "The specificity of focus makes it an especially good design for practical problems – for questions, situations or puzzling occurrences arising from everyday practice" (p. 29) .

Data Collection

This study was designed to be a qualitative, descriptive case study, investigating the phenomena of servant leadership, particularly how it manifests itself in a female public school leader and the school in which she serves as principal. Data were collected

through individual, person-to-person, in-depth interviews that were designed to produce thick, rich descriptions of the principal, her characteristics, and leadership behaviors (Merriam, 1998). In addition, a focus group interview was conducted by the researcher. Data were also collected through artifacts such as written reports, parent letters, staff and student newsletters, staff meeting minutes, personal notes, and newspaper articles.

Data collection in a qualitative study is interactive and fluid. While collecting data in this case study, the researcher was open and sensitive to information that emerged throughout the collection process (Merriam, 1998). Given that qualitative data are emergent and flexible, the researcher used comparative and continuous analysis, constantly shaped the process, and followed up on new data as they emerged.

Qualitative research involves the use of three basic strategies: (a) interviewing, (b) observing, and (c) analyzing documents; however, according to Merriam (1998), "Rarely…are all three strategies used equally. One or two methods of data collection predominate" (p. 137). For this study, interviewing both individual and a focus group, and analyzing documents were the predominant methods used. Triangulation, using these sources of data, was employed to substantiate data and enhance validity. Merriam stated, "Using multiple methods of data collection and analysis, triangulation strengthens reliability as well as internal validity" (p. 207).

<center>Interview Protocol</center>

The goal of this study was to better understand the phenomenon of servant leadership through investigating how the defined traits were reflected through a leader's behavior. Upon purposeful selection of a servant leader and voluntary participants, a list

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of questions was designed for use in field interviews. The researcher used the literature reviewed to develop questions on servant leadership and women in leadership. Semi-structured, open-ended questions were designed to allow the participants to elaborate and expand on the questions (see Appendix G and Appendix H). Merriam (1998) suggested, "More open-ended and less structured… formats assume that individual respondents define the world in unique ways" (p. 74). Additionally, Hancock and Algozzine (2006) stated,

> Semi-structured interviews are particularly well-suited for case study research. Using this approach, researchers ask predetermined but flexibly worded questions, the answers to which provide tentative answers to the researcher's questions. In addition to posing predetermined questions, researchers using semi structured interviews ask follow-up questions designed to probe more deeply issues of interest to interviewees. In this manner, semi structured interviews invite interviewees to express themselves openly and freely and to define the world from their own perspectives, not solely from the perspective of the researcher. (p. 40)

The servant leader was interviewed in three 90-minute sessions. The first session focused on her family history and educational background, including the experiences she had before entering the field of public education. The second interview investigated her particular experiences as a leader, and finally, the third interview focused on the meaning her experiences held. The sessions were held at the home of Mrs. North and the home office of the researcher at convenient times for Mrs. North. Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. "Member checking" (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006, p.

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67) was utilized, a process that allows the interviewee to review the written transcript and verify or question the "accurate portrayal of…actions or words" (p. 67). Hancock and Algozzine stated "member checking" (p. 67) increases the credibility and reliability of the information gathered in the interview.

Participants selected for individual interviews consisted of staff members who had worked for Mrs. North, in various capacities, for a minimum of five years prior to her retirement. In addition to having been directly supervised by Mrs. North, they were selected because of their extended experiences under her supervision as team leaders, improvement team members, and work in other special capacities, giving each interviewee an in-depth knowledge of her leadership qualities. Each volunteer was interviewed at her home, in a private meeting room at a local church, or in the home office of the researcher, at the convenience of the participant. Using the semi structured interview questions, the researcher asked follow up questions and probed issues of interests mentioned by the participants.

In addition to interviewing the volunteers one-on-one, the researcher interviewed seven staff members in a focus group setting. These staff members were teachers who were directly supervised by Mrs. North for a minimum of five years but were not involved in building level leadership capacities other than inside their classroom. The focus group interview was held at a local church in a private conference room. The focus group session lasted approximately 90 minutes.

The interview questions for both the leader and the staff participants were reviewed prior to the interviews by three educators for validity and reliability. Merriam

(1998) stated, "Validity and reliability are concerns that can be approached through careful attention to a study's conceptualization and the way in which data were collected, analyzed, and interpreted" (p. 200). The researcher also pilot tested the questions with a school counselor who was familiar with the servant leader. The counselor was selected due to his experience and background and was asked to review the questions for sensitivity and content. These measures were used to ensure the questions were understandable and asked what was meant to be asked. It was also an effort to ensure the answers would provide information necessary to answer the research questions. At the end of each interview session, the researcher asked participants to verify summary comments and, upon transcription, offered them the opportunity to review the type-written version of the interview to ensure the results were trustworthy and accurate.

Finally, artifacts were collected to substantiate the information gathered from the interviews. Artifacts collected consisted of meeting minutes, faculty announcements, parent letters, school newsletters, board reports, newspaper articles, and personal notes. The artifacts were studied for supportive evidence.

<center>Data Analysis</center>

In a qualitative case study, data analysis occurs throughout the research process. Additionally, unique to organizing data in qualitative analysis was the need for the researcher "to create or adapt concepts relevant to the data rather than apply a set of pre-established rules" (Merriam, 1998, p. 165). Hancock and Algozzine (2006) also suggested "when information that is collected defines new questions, the case study researcher adjusts ongoing and subsequent methods and procedures" (p. 57). This process

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required the researcher to constantly analyze and compare data as it was collected so when a particular idea arose in an interview or document, the category construction remained fluid yet continued to answer the research questions. Merriam (1998) stated, "These comparisons lead to tentative categories that are then compared to each other and to other instances. Comparisons are constantly made within and between levels of conceptualization until a theory can be formulated" (p. 159). Therefore, detailed notes were recorded and data were continuously analyzed throughout the research process.

Another common procedure for organizing qualitative data is referred to as "coding" (Merriam, 1998, p. 164). Merriam explained, "Coding occurs at two levels – identifying information about the data and interpretive constructs related to analysis" (p. 164). The two levels of coding are identified as open coding and axial coding (Merriam, Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Open coding, and later axial coding, were used to organize the small bits of data into manageable, useable pieces of information.

When using open coding, data from transcribed interviews were examined for common themes. The researcher identified and tentatively named the conceptual categories to group the phenomena observed (Merriam, 1998). Material was immediately marked, coded, and organized so that the data was readily retrievable. The goal was to better understand servant leadership by creating descriptive categories and to form a tentative structure for analysis. Events, phrases, and topics that revealed similar concepts were grouped into the same category. At this level, a spreadsheet was designed to organize concepts as they emerged by listing reoccurring themes from interviews under defining, conceptual category headings.

Once themes were developed, axial coding was employed to synthesize the data. It involved a complex process of re-examining the proposed categories, identifying ways they are linked, to connect emerging themes (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This coding system was used to sort and assign unique identifiers making the data manageable during the analysis process (Merriam, 1998). To organize the large amount of data inventoried throughout the coding process, the researcher consistently refocused on the three overarching research questions for the case study.

Finally, triangulation, the use of "multiple sources of data…to confirm the emerging findings [was implemented] using outside sources to validate case study materials" (Merriam, 1998, p. 24). Interview transcripts, field notes, meeting minutes, publications, and other documents were examined to support descriptive themes, values, attitudes, and other phenomena that may occur. This strategy was employed throughout the study when separating data into categories to strengthen the validity and reliability of the phenomena researched. "Member checking" (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006, p. 67) was also utilized, to allow the interviewees to review the written transcripts, a process that increases the credibility and reliability on the information gathered in the interviews.

Summarizing the information gathered by the researcher was the final process of data analysis. After the data was synthesized and patterns identified to make sense of the study, the summary was developed. The summary highlighted what had been discovered and what could be learned from the research.

Summary

The research and design methodology were presented in Chapter Three. An introduction preceded the overview of the research problem, purpose, and research questions. The population and sample section described how the subjects were selected for the study. Interview protocols were discussed and the rationale for a case study was defined. Data collection and instrumentation outlined the methods used to collect information for the study. The interview protocol was presented, and the data analysis section defined how the researcher used the constant comparative method to organize and analyze multiple sources of data. Within Chapter Four the data analysis and research findings are presented. Finally, Chapter Five describes the research findings, conclusions, and implication for further study.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

The focus of this qualitative case study was to examine the behaviors of a female administrator who displayed characteristics of a servant leader. Furthermore, this study sought to investigate the impact of her leadership on the staff and culture of the public school at which she was principal. Staff members who had been directly supervised by the principal were interviewed and artifacts were examined to gather data to analyze how the servant leader characteristics, as defined by Greenleaf (2008) and Spears (2004), impacted her middle school staff and students. Face-to-face interviews were also held with the leader under study.

The guiding question of this investigation asked how a female public school administrator with servant leadership qualities impacts her environment. To answer the larger question, this study was designed to examine the following research questions:

1.   How is servant leadership exhibited by a female leader in a public school setting?

2.   How do stakeholders in a public school setting describe a female servant leader?

3.   How does servant leadership manifest itself in the culture of the public education setting?

Participants

A total of 17 participants volunteered to participate in this study. All of the
participants had been directly supervised by the female principal at a particular middle
school in the Midwest for five or more years. Nine volunteers were interviewed
individually. In addition, a group consisting of seven teachers from one grade level in the
school participated in a focus group interview. Four males and 13 females were
interviewed, which is a close approximation of the male to female ratio employed at the
school during the administrator's tenure. Five of the interviewees are still employed
while the other 12 retired within the last six years, including the principal selected for the
study. Staff members were purposefully selected based on the number of years they had
worked for the administrator and the opportunities they had to observe her leadership
qualities due to participation on a variety of leadership teams. Three participants were
hired by the principal and were new to their careers while the others had more than five
years experience teaching before the principal in the study became their direct supervisor.
This allowed the researcher to gather input from new teachers, in the developmental
stages of their career, as well as those who were seasoned and had experienced multiple
leadership styles. Finally, the servant leader participated in three separate one-on-one
interviews with the researcher.

Data Analysis

Each interview began by asking the volunteer to describe the administrator
selected for the case study. For the purposes of this study, and to preserve confidentiality,

the leader will be referred to as Mrs. Mary North and the district of her employment as

Dodge River Schools.

At the beginning of the study, the purposefully selected servant leader was

approached by the researcher to request permission and receive consent to participate and

be studied as a single case study in educational leadership. Mrs. North appeared

somewhat surprised and hesitant to participate. The researcher then explained that she

had been identified as a person with a specific style of leadership by three educational

professionals and was the only nominee who had been mentioned multiple times. Mrs.

North then shared a page of her daily journal activity that she had completed the prior

week by saying, "I was supposed to list my characteristics and I have written listener,

empathic, and helping others." These three characteristics aligned with the first three

characteristics outlined by Spears (2004) as traits for servant leaders. She then concluded,

"Okay, I will do it if it will help you."

Personal Description

The first meeting with Mrs. North was held in her rural home five miles north of

Dodge River. Mrs. North lived alone in the house she had built in 1975 on a portion of a

large family farm within a mile of the home in which she was raised. A long, gravel

driveway led to a secluded clearing where her home is surrounded by large, native

deciduous trees. Along the driveway sat an older model Oliver tractor. Adjacent to her

home was a small barn and fenced area with two horses. Her home was a natural wood-

sided cabin structure situated on the side of a hill. The deck on the front of her home

overlooked water from a creek that passed through her property. Her late model pickup

truck was parked on the gravel near the entryway close to the deck and had a set of older, worn seats from a pontoon boat loaded in the truck bed. A four-wheeler sat next to the truck. The weather allowed for the doors and windows of her home to be open to the early fall breeze.

Mrs. North was on the telephone when the researcher arrived, but waved the researcher into her home. The décor of the home was simple, neatly organized, and comfortable with minimal decorations. A picture above the fireplace in the living area depicted horses with riders on a hunting trip. The living, kitchen, and dining area were designed as a large, open L-shaped room. Mrs. North invited the researcher to sit with her at the dining table and offered refreshments before beginning the interview.

Mrs. North is in her mid-sixties, physically fit and of average stature with short, stylish gray hair. She wore denim jeans, a cotton button-down shirt, a sweater vest and casual work shoes. She indicated she had just come back from the river 15 miles north of her home where she was in the process of winterizing her pontoon boat that she shares with her sister. As she prepared the beverages, she shared that the phone call was from a friend who was concerned about a neighbor with small children who were going to have their water shut off because they could not pay their utility bill. Mrs. North said, "What do you do? Well, I know what I will do."

During the first interview, the researcher began by asking Mrs. North to tell about herself. Mrs. North described herself by stating,

I'm the oldest of eight kids. I attended Catholic schools all through my schooling.

And I was in the convent for seven years. I received my bachelor of science at St.

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Mary's where I entered the convent after my first year. I left the convent in 1970. I then came back home to work in Dodge River Schools. I got my master's in counseling and specialist degree in school administration. I've been principal, assistant principal, counselor, and teacher. I have been married and divorced. I've adopted one child, and have two stepchildren and six grandchildren. I live on a hill in the woods. And I love horses and boating and reading and quiet time with God and my family.

She further explained,

My mother died when I was 25 and I still had three brothers that were in high school and grade school. I've kind of been like a—probably a second mother as the oldest person in this family and taken on lots of responsibilities because that's just what the oldest does, I guess. When I retired, a big part of my decision was that daddy had cancer and needed help. I was glad I was able to spend so much time with him before he passed away. I don't think I would have retired otherwise but I wanted to be there to take care of him. I think you kind of carry over the care-giving and the nurturing and feel responsible for people and to your career. I had lots of spiritual development, just by the very nature of being a Religious Sister of Mercy. You know, the main goal is to help other people and to be close to God and I think you just kind of carry that with you. It's just part of who you are. And it translates into the way you lead, you know, the way you teach.

When asked about her early career experiences that led to her roles in leadership, she replied,

> Before I finished college the nuns needed a teacher, before I was even—had had student teaching, so actually I got sent out to teach, like, 44 inner city kids and I had no student teaching, no teacher's manuals, no supportive principal. And so you just did what you had to do to survive, you know, and then I moved around a lot. I was in Omaha, and then I went to Independence before I came back home. My mother was dying of cancer at that time. She died in November and I came home in June.

Mrs. North indicated that her large family upbringing had a significant effect on her leadership style. She stated that she had become a nurturing person as the oldest in her family and by helping out after her mother passed away. She also believed her Catholic faith and training was important to her personal development and that she drew upon the training throughout her career.

When staff members were asked to describe Mrs. North, they would reflect on times when she had been their teacher, a peer teacher, counselor, assistant principal, and principal. One staff member had been her high school classmate and she had been a classroom teacher to one of the participants. For 33 of the 37 years she was an educator, she was employed in the same rural community where she grew up. The only time she lived away from her home community were the seven years she spent in college, the convent, and teaching in schools where she was placed by the convent. The remaining years of her life, Mrs. North has lived and worked in the Dodge River School district. The relationships she had with many of her staff members were long term and

multifaceted. She has developed relationships not only at work, but at church and as an active member of the community. Most participants remembered her as a peer teacher, counselor, and administrator, of which she spent approximately a third of her career in each position. They frequently used descriptors such as "life long friend," "mentor of mine," "a very caring person," "a wonderful listening ear," "confidential," and "one who is always there."

One staff member started the focus group out by sharing the following recollection of Mrs. North.

Well, I can start back in sixth grade because she was my sixth grade teacher. And one of the things I remember—I don't know how much about sixth you remember, about that age, but I remember calm. I remember she could get her point across with a look. It didn't take yelling or big words. I remember one time sitting at a table kind of like this doing a math group and I did something squirrelly. I mean, it wasn't terrible, but I threw my arm up and I just about smacked her. I was so excited and she—you know, a lot of teachers would have, maybe sometimes in my career I would have said something about "settle down" or something and she just gave me the Mrs. North stare and I just went "ahhhh". And it taught me social skills without being overt about it. It was just like, okay, I need to pay attention to my surroundings and know where people are. And I remember that now, so it was a big deal to me then.

Another staff member, who met Mrs. North early in his career as a young professional and is now an administrator, stated,

Mrs. North was a person that on a first impression you just absolutely knew it was a

person you could rely on, put your loyalty in and trust. You know, trust and loyalty

come to mind real fast. Caring, you know, absolutely you could always tell that she,

in her heart, cared about what was going on and not just with you at work but with

you at home and with you as a person. She was really, really good at relaying that

and just giving you that sense of this person cares about me, you know, genuinely.

She was good at just not only being a supervisor and/or mentor, but somebody who

pulled everyone together and everyone could, in the building, without hesitation

know that she cared about each one of us and us being not only a good professional

community, but good to each other. So very special.

He continued,

Again, who she is just—you can look across and see someone for the first time and

you already have your impression of who they are. And she almost had that aura

like an angel. The first time you saw her you—wow, that—like a—caring. She

looked like such a wonderful person just looking across the room. You know, the

way she—if you saw her sitting and talking with people. You know, you could

automatically tell that. I don't think I could ever have that aura. Wish I could.

The dimension of spirituality embodied by Mrs. North continued to resurface

throughout the interviews. One educator mentioned that during crises, Mrs. North's faith

and spirituality became particularly evident. A poignant memory, involving the tragic

death of a teacher's child, which plagued the building at the beginning of her

principalship, was summed up by a focus group member stating, "She really had a

strength about her, you know, very spiritual, that helped us all make it through. Had we

not had her, for an administrator, I think our building would have fallen apart." Another

teacher added,

> We were sitting there, shaking. All of these adults because we had just witnessed
>
> something that you should only hear on national news. And a kind of calm came
>
> over us after she talked. And I know it shook her to the core. But that's the kind of
>
> leadership you need.

The focus group also mentioned her not being afraid to say, "I'll pray about this and

talk to you tomorrow." In addition, all of the staff members were aware of her

upbringing in the Catholic schools and training in the convent which established a

certain expectation regarding her faith. A teacher explained, "she didn't push it [her faith]

on you but you knew she had a faith and practiced it in her work."

Another faculty member, who was hired as a young teacher by Mrs. North,

commented,

> Probably in one word, I mean, if I could narrow a very broad question down would
>
> be, you know, what comes to mind with Mary would be just genuine. There's
>
> nothing fake or false about her, which—and her genuineness in terms of her
>
> kindness to people, it's real, you know. And whether or not it was in our general
>
> conversations or if—even when there were times that we had conversations that—
>
> on the level of she needed to give me criticism or constructive criticism or for lack
>
> of a better term, put me in my place a little bit, it was always done tactfully.
>
> Genuine, in a way that no matter what happened after you saw her, whether it was

something bad or good you felt better that you were—that you'd had that

conversation. Even if it was a conversation that maybe you didn't want to have but

in the end it was something that you were a better person and you were better off

and you felt better by having that conversation. And I can't say that about a lot of

people, so—

Another seasoned, veteran teacher described her relationship with Mrs. North by

stating,

Mary is a person, I think, that makes you feel so special. She makes you feel

knowledgeable at your craft. She makes you feel as though you are definitely a

friend. She is a person of –religion might not be what I want to say but religion and

values. She values your values, your thoughts, your beliefs and makes you feel

special. Just makes you feel special.

Finally, another veteran teacher shared a personal story by stating, "At school, she

was always there for us with whatever. I got diagnosed with cancer and she was right

there with me all the way with just whatever….I think she helped everybody be the best

that they could be."

Leadership

Mrs. North was initially very brief and succinct in her description of her leadership

style. When asked how she would describe her leadership she replied, "Probably a

consensus builder. Bring people in and we make decisions together and – period….You'd

talk then send it out to the groups and it would come back with what people thought. You

know it took awhile." She concluded her description saying, "They knew I held myself accountable, therefore they were held accountable."

The faculty conveyed she was one who used few words but "could get her point across with a look or a well-timed pause." They saw her strength in her ability to listen and gather input from staff before making her decisions. Staff from the focus group described her collaborative nature by saying, "By committee. Leadership by committee."

A teacher, who later became an assistant principal in the same building, working directly for Mrs. North, shared,

Mary's leadership is a collaborative leadership. She always wanted to make sure that the pros and cons were all put on the table before a decision was made, so she wasn't authoritarian by any means. She was very collaborative and we all felt very comfortable knowing that Mary would listen to what we had to say and would consider it as a possibility. She liked and respected your thoughts and your voice regardless of who it might be, whether it be me who was the closest one to work with her during the time when she was principal or if it was a kid or a teacher.

Another teacher in an individual interview stated,

I mean she definitely was in charge of what she had to do and was interested in the whole building. Not that she ever overstepped her bounds or anything, but I definitely felt like she was a leader. She, when she got the principal job, was very determined to see the big picture, to get input from every single person in the building, certified people, everybody, whatever their area was, she wanted their input. And she wanted to make the best decisions based on that input. She very

much wanted to build a community. And this was before community was quite the buzzword that it is now. That was part of her goal, to build a community, and she did. She wanted everyone to feel included. She sent out newsletters on a regular basis that said what was going on with everybody professionally as well as personally. Which was a good thing, we all really appreciated it. She wanted everybody to be a whole person and she wanted to address the whole person.

One staff member articulated her frustration with the time it took to gather input and make a decision. She explained,

She weighed everything and sometimes that frustrated me. I am the kind of person that wants an answer right now and sometimes that frustrated me. And Mary would—and it did work—I mean, it always worked out. I guess I just wanted somebody to come up and—have an answer right then and there for me. But she was very—I don't know how to—I mean, I don't mean it in a bad way or anything, it was just it took so long to make a decision.

One experienced teacher, who had been Mrs. North's high school classmate, shared her experience regarding her leadership style. She articulated,

She was a definite leader. I don't know if she was a natural leader, but she was a definite leader. But she led without force. The only time that you saw a heavy hand was if she had specifically asked you to do certain things and you did not do it or didn't do it in a timely fashion but other than that she always led in a way that made you know what she wanted and when she wanted it and without feeling like you were being overpowered or coerced or anything like that. But if you crossed her,

you know, she knew. She always knew what was going on. And even if you crossed

her without meaning to. Which, I guess maybe "crossed her" isn't the right word.

But if you failed to meet her expectations, let's put it that way, she let you know.

Which was good because then you knew what you had to do to meet those

expectations. That's what you want; you want to know what your boss expects from

you. And she gave us a lot of resources to use to do whatever she asked us to do. I

mean, she never just sent us out with an assignment with no idea of how to do it.

The same staff member closed her answer to this question by stating,

She wanted us, above all, to do what was best for the students. That was our

number one priority. Whatever was best for the students. Sometimes it got a little

overwhelming, but it all led to that goal. And she told us that all the time, "I want

what is best for the students." And she wanted us to be up on the latest of whatever

the teaching—education community was wanting us to do at that time. She came in

at a time of change. I remember the former principal saying, "You guys don't know

what you're in for. Everything's going to change." And it did, and it all hit her, you

know, it's all new to her just like it was new to us. And she wanted us to be on the

cutting edge and we were. We grumbled sometimes but then later on we realized

what a service she had done us because we were way ahead of the rest of the district

in a lot of things by the time she retired. And then it wasn't so—they were all

struggling and we weren't so much because we had it already under control.

The use of committees was mentioned by nearly every interviewee. Several staff

members shared that Mrs. North developed many committees during her time of

leadership, and although they shared some frustration at the amount of time it took to make decisions and implement changes, they also appreciated being involved in the decisions regarding the processes of daily operation of the school.

Another leadership tool used effectively by Mrs. North was that of persuasion. Several faculty members reflected on her ability to get things done by suggestion and appealing to their strengths. One faculty member stated,

She wanted me to do something in particular and I really didn't want to do it. Anyway, she goes, "Well, now, you know, these are all the possibilities of doing this and I think if you try this, this, and this, it might lead you to where you need to be going." And sometimes I think that she knows how to get to us without us knowing that we're being got. She has that natural way, that and her facial expressions. You know, she has that solemn, you know, nun face, and she just has a way of when you walk out the door she's conned you into doing it and you didn't even know that you did it. It was "Okay, Mary, I'll do it. Whatever you say" [laughter]. She will also say, "I have the most confidence in you. I know that you can do this." Or, she'll say, "I really want you to look into this. I would really like you to go to this conference. Bring back some information to share with us."

It's kind of like when she wanted me to be the athletic director at the middle school. She said, "I would like for you to take over the athletic directorship at the middle school." I said, "Oh, Mary, I don't think I can." She'd say, "Yes, you can. You have the qualifications. You have the leadership. And you can do this." And I said, "Well, I appreciate that but at this time with my family, and that's going to

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take a lot of time, I don't think that I can give the time and the quality that you're looking for." She had the most confidence and she knew that I had the ability, I had the qualifications. I could do a good job, make everything look well. Pull everything off. She had that instilled that she knew that I could do that. Maybe it's because I just didn't quite have enough self-confidence in myself to take over that job and do it at the level she would've expected of me.

In support of Mrs. North's ability to persuade and convince staff to participate in changes she wanted to introduce to the school, a veteran staff member said,

She's a dealmaker, total dealmaker. She never wants to hurt anybody. She always wants to include everybody in her decisions, whatever she's making and she doesn't want to hurt anybody's feelings. None. And she walks the walk. She comes to you and says, "This is what I'm thinking, what are you thinking?" And then somehow she makes you feel like it was your idea, you know? Even if it doesn't quite go the way you want it to, somehow you felt like you had a piece of it. But she also likes to bounce things off of you. She'll tell you what she's thinking and want to know your opinion. I used to say she surrounds herself with teachers she respects and then she respects their opinion. Because she does get input from other people. She may not choose what you chose, but you feel like she at least cared what her faculty thought. And I was just counting up in my head, I had six principals in my teaching career and I know people sometimes got frustrated because she took longer to make a decision than a lot of people. But you knew that it was made with the interest of her faculty in mind. When she retired, several

people wrote letters and I wrote a letter. Several kids wrote letters and I remember one of the things that I said about her was that you might not have agreed with her, but you always respected her and her opinion. It's rare that you do that with an administrator. She had lots of key sayings. One of them was, "Gotta circle the wagons….Walk the walk."

Throughout the interview process, Mrs. North's desire to gather input from staff members, continue to support their growth, and build a familial atmosphere were evident. Just as evident was the desire by the staff members to please Mrs. North and support her in her administration of the school. One staff member reflected,

At our school, when we went through some times with some administrative problems, somehow Mary made us jump through every hoop and do everything they asked and we did it for Mary. We all knew that we were doing it for Mary. You know, there were so many things going on and the other administrators and even like the superintendent and stuff, they were like, jealous, that Mary had that kind of respect from her building that we would do all that stuff. And we also felt like Mary protected us in a lot of ways. I mean, there was a lot of stuff going on and she did protect us in a lot of ways. I mean we did everything we had to do because we did it for Mary.

Character and Professional Strengths

When asked about character and professional strengths, most of the respondents indicated that the Mrs. North's strengths were interchangeable between who she was as a person in day-to-day life and how she led as a professional. When Mrs. North was asked

to relay what she saw as her character and professional strengths. She replied,

Probably my ability to listen and be empathetic and help people to solve problems. I think those. Sort of the counseling traits are probably my strengths as a person. Professionally, well, I don't know. The ability to recognize people's strengths and to bring them together for the greater good of everybody else, that you don't need to be the person that knows everything. That you can gather knowledge—you know, people, and they will help you and that works. It worked for me to do it like that. If I had to choose one, I don't know what would be the strongest. Seeing the strengths in other people and helping them to realize their strengths, maybe.

The focus group named Mrs. North's strengths as "respect," "integrity," "compassionate," and "people skills." Several staff members agreed when one member stated, "I really felt when I left school she had made me a better person." Another retired teacher articulated, "I think every teacher thought that she was her friend. Maybe even her best friend. Everybody thought that they were so connected to her—in such a special way." One teacher added, "Respect for no matter what job you have, whether you are the custodian or the aide or the hall monitor, just teacher, whatever, I mean, she respected what you were doing for the kids and for the building." Additionally, a teacher shared, "It wasn't just about school, it was about you as a person. Because she cared about what happened to you and your family."

Listening and the ability to persuade were frequently mentioned as some of Mrs. North's strengths. One focus group member shared,

She was the best listener I think I've ever known. A very good listener. She listened to the kids, she listened—she never cut you off….She looked you in the eye, she listened and she even paused before she responded, but she did that with the children too. Even if they were non-verbal and she couldn't tell what they were saying. And so they trusted her. And you know sometimes they don't trust adults. Certainly not adults that are going to say you're going to have three days of [in-school suspension]. Many of those kids had never experienced the art of negotiation. So it's the first time—they've watched their parents bicker and be physical and they—we—all witnessed the power of negotiation with Mary.

Another characteristic that continuously emerged throughout the focus group and individual interviews was Mrs. North's skill of showing her concern toward staff and students by always being in attendance at public and private events to celebrate or support staff and students. Various personal stories were shared and one member of the group articulated a particularly poignant experience, stating,

When my husband died, I opened the door and who's the first person on my doorstep, it is my principal, my boss, with her overnight bag. She's coming to stay because she knows my parents and his parents were both out of town. And there's nobody with me and the kids. And she spends the night with us….she didn't ask, she just came.

In summation, another member of the focus group stated,

She's very private but yet if you needed anything she's—I mean she was there.

She's very holistic. You know, she really does care about the whole child, the

whole teacher, the whole. She cares about all of us in that way.

Mrs. North's ability to seek out others with specific strengths for specific jobs was

also mentioned by over half of the interviewees. Her awareness of the abilities of others

was articulated by one teacher by stating, "She just knew [about people]. She had a sense

about who could do what. She took time to really get to know her staff…and she was

good at hiring people who could pick up the slack." A former teacher who is now an

administrator stated,

> She nurtured your strength and understood that and didn't try to bend you into
>
> something that you were not, you know. For a person of such morals and character,
>
> she was so understanding of personalities and where people were at in their own
>
> lives. She didn't expect perfection from you. She obviously expected your best, but
>
> not perfection, because we're not.

Another teacher who worked for Mrs. North for seven years before leaving education to

pursue other ventures, summed up this ability by stating,

> I chose that building even having the education I did. I was high school certified
>
> and I chose that building even though it would require more education primarily
>
> because of Mary's strengths. She surrounded herself with good people and good
>
> employees. Being in small business for myself, having employees, doing things that
>
> I do, if you don't have good people underneath you and good people in the
>
> classrooms or in the trenches, as they say, then it'll fail no matter what the leader is

like. Mary did a great job, I think, at putting people, dynamic, different, diverse people in positions to where that building could run itself as far as discipline and education. She did a real good job at reading people, I think, and knowing good people to hire. I think she was a great judge of character and, you know, I think she was consistent and fair and she was able to relate to all ages and groups.

In closing, the same employee indicated that Mrs. North was able to lead by example, gain the respect of her employees, persuade them to follow her direction, and elicit their desire to not disappoint her. He explained,

I think everybody in the building—and I don't know where this came from but when I worked there—I'm speaking from the employees' side, they did what was right because it was right and that's kind of what Mary got in motion and then they would just take that and I don't know… they didn't want to let her down. I don't know if it was as much that or if they just knew that she just put good people in there. I'm not for sure but I really think that was probably her biggest professional strength was when she left something she had enough great employees—and I think the expectations that they didn't want to let her down. And so I think that's why there are so many great teachers there. Not only teachers but disciplinarians and just people as far as the education system is concerned. They're the type of people you want in the classroom and in the hallways and the cafeteria and playgrounds.

In addition to caring about her staff members and their families, strong hiring practices, and recognizing staff members' strengths, Mrs. North was known to regularly support and praise her staff and students for their accomplishments. This was evident

throughout the interviews and in documents that staff shared with the researcher. Mrs. North acknowledged accomplishments by presentations in social gatherings, student assemblies, and in private hand written notes that she placed in teachers' mailboxes. One teacher stated,

> She has things, like paperwork, like all principals have to do, but she's always good at giving you your "atta-boys" by little notes or by you never know. She might say, "Had a parent talk to me. They really liked what you were doing. I wanted to pass that along to you."

The same teacher relayed an experience where a parent had written a letter about how the teacher had gone above her daily classroom expectations to help her child. Mrs. North brought the letter to the teacher and read it to her, acknowledging the action and the fact that it was important to her as the building principal that the teacher was recognized for her efforts.

Mrs. North's care for and encouragement of the staff continued after she was no longer their leader. A member from the focus group relayed a memory of an event that happened the first August after she retired.

> Do you remember the first fall after Mary retired? She came back to the building at, like four in the morning, before the first day of school and she walked around and looked in our rooms to see everything. She wrote us all a letter and put it in our mailboxes about walking around and seeing how we had fixed our rooms and she wished us the best for the new school year.

During an individual interview, one teacher gave some examples of another trait that was mentioned throughout several interviews. She indicated that besides integrity, trustworthiness, and tolerance, Mrs. North was determined.

When Mary, I mean really believed in something there was very few people that were going to change her mind, you know. But I tell you what, she was always, always willing to listen. She would consider everything you said but you always knew if Mary agreed with you maybe she would change her mind but, you know a lot of times we as teachers, we're coming from our own special little niche here. And an administrator has to look at the entire picture. And a lot of times we don't probably don't remember that, but Mary did....She always wanted our input. So you always knew that she respected what you said but you also knew that she was determined to make the right decision and follow through with it….and it was for everybody.

Bringing People Together Toward a Common Goal

One of many challenges for leaders is to bring people together to work for the good of all, whether it is in a school, business, or community, and establish a "power with" rather than a "power over" culture. When people believe they have a part in the growth of whatever they are involved in, they feel ownership and a responsibility toward that goal. Mrs. North explained the ways she brought people together toward a common goal by stating,

We had grade level meetings, we had curriculum meetings, we had team meetings, we had hospitality meetings, you know, and each of the different committees

addressed different issues. I think that's been changed some but those things

worked well for me and seemed to work okay for them. I just think you made lots

of walks, too. I took the time to make personal contact with people when I needed

them to help out with something or get them on board with what we were planning

to do. And if they had any questions or suggestions, my door was always open and I

think people felt comfortable to come in.

Reflecting back and comparing a prior building atmosphere with the family-

oriented, team atmosphere established by Mrs. North, one faculty member relayed,

It used to be at the middle school that we would have teams. Like, we had two

sixth-grade teams, a north team, south team….I can remember when we first started

[the middle school concept] the administration kind of thought that it would be

good to kind of pit team against team. They thought that it would make us "up our

game." Well, it backfired because you got to where parents would request teams.

They saw who was where. And, you know, everybody works hard at that middle

school….everybody tries so hard. You didn't need to do that. You didn't need that

competition. And so Mary decided that rather than competition we needed to work

together. And so she really led us in the direction of social studies teacher on south

team works with social studies teacher on north team and we really, really got

somewhere after we were able to do that. We shared expertise and curriculum ideas.

And so I think she made us value one another as teachers and all of us are heading

towards the same goal. That is doing the best job we can in that classroom.

Although teaming and committees were mentioned by all interviewees, the focus

group discussed Mrs. North's ability to bring people together by beginning with, "I think she earned it. She got us—we believed in her and I think we all just stepped in line for her, you know? Whatever the goal was, whatever thing we needed to work on—if she asked it of us, we just did it." Others buttressed the initial comment, saying, "Out of respect" and "because Mary said so" and, finally, "that's all it takes, Mary said it needs to be done."

Highlighting the fact that Mrs. North lead a variety of staff members with unique personalities, another focus group member said, "Look at the different personalities. I mean, there were lots of, wow, spectrum. A huge spectrum of personalities and she managed to do that with everybody." Another teacher summed it up by saying,

Because she'd do anything for you, you'd want to do anything for her. There, again, that respect. If she asked it, I knew it had to be done. I didn't question, "Well, is it the right thing?" No, Mary said that this is what needed to be done, so it does. And there, I didn't question it really, just did it.

Another tactic mentioned by the focus group members that Mrs. North used to bring people together toward a common goal was best stated by one teacher:

She would try to find out as much about a person she could and use it to bring them in. You know, the men lots of times didn't really want to go along with her because she was making the deals. You know, they are many times more black and white. And so she would learn about fishing, she'd learn about hunting, she would—you know, all that stuff so that she could bring that in so that they'd go along with her.

The group then reminisced about a relationship Mary built with a custodian getting to

know about Star Trek and the signs and language used by those who followed the Star Trek phenomena. By the accounts given by the focus group, Mrs. North was skilled at building relationships with people and making connections by learning their interests and conversing with them in the hallways and wherever she would pass them throughout her day. The relationships she built helped strengthen staff members' desire to help Mrs. North accomplish whatever task was set before them.

Several other skills were implemented by Mrs. North to bring people together for a common goal. The focus group articulated how she shared control with staff and gave others credit for their accomplishments. A teacher stated,

When she had whatever needed to be taken care of, she went to those people who had the strength there, so that everybody got included at some point and gave them control. Whereas, lots of times you don't feel like you have any, she'd find somebody and say, "Well, why don't you do this?" and gave the credit to the teacher. She never took it for herself. And I had worked for principals that you did all the work and then they took all the glory, you know? She would never do that. She always celebrated the teachers.

In addition to gathering input from staff members and including them in developing the vision of the school, Mrs. North also asked teachers to use the information they learned to influence their coworkers. One teacher explained,

She put me on a few committees, which you have ownership when you're on committees, when you're part of it and you have to present. That makes you have ownership and you're going to pull your co-workers in that direction. A lot of

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times—the majority of the times—I remember she would have other teachers present ideas. They would go to these math meetings with us, they would go to curricular meetings and whatever. And then she would have them come back and present. Maybe she would introduce or talk about the administration side or what the state's doing or funding or something like that but she would also have the teachers say, "This is what we're going to do," kind of present it where it's first-person. And I think that helped Mary standing up there saying, "This is what you are going to do. You're going to rewrite these [grade level expectations] with big ideas." Here again, she had employees that she could trust and she used those employees as if they had ownership.

In addition to the "soft skills" exhibited by Mrs. North, one retired teacher indicated she was willing to work toward common goals because the goals were defined and understandable. She stated,

She made her goals clear. She was able to define them well so that everybody understood what she was going for. And she asked for input from others how to achieve those goals. She didn't always take their advice but she asked for input and made everybody feel important when they gave suggestions. She was also good at sensing people's abilities and interest and so if she thought you would be good at doing this to achieve that goal she would guide you that way and somebody else maybe was better at something else.

Reccurring throughout the interviews was the amount of time spent by Mrs. North while working with people. Every faculty member who was interviewed mentioned

the amount of effort and time she took to communicate and build positive relationships with the faculty. One faculty member further compared Mrs. North's ability to persuade people toward her goals to other leadership styles. He articulated,

I don't know if she always did it the easiest way. But she did it the only way it really works, probably. You know, the easiest way, even if people grumble about it you can get people to do things through fear rather than trust and loyalty. Quite honestly, you can say, "you need to get on this ship or else." That wasn't her, that wasn't her style. She would obviously meet with us. We had meetings all the time, as I mentioned. And, you know, talk about what her hopes were, what her vision was, what her thoughts were for going forward. And, certainly, she took input and gave input. And as I mentioned if there was something—if she felt resistance from somebody she would, again, make the walk and go talk to them about it. And we always knew she was the boss. She would sit down and talk about what's best for our students and if we were all pulling the same direction, was it best for the kids and for all of us to be comfortable. Not that that always happened, she tried, you know and probably got as much—made that happen as good as anybody, getting people to all do the same thing.

The same faculty member, who is currently an administrator, further explained how Mrs. North would work with those who were resistant to working toward the same goal by sharing a personal experience he had with her when a new behavioral program was introduced at the middle school. He gave an example of how she made personal

contacts and visited with people individually, or as she would describe, "made

the walk". He stated,

> Love and Logic was one where I was resistant. Did she get me onboard? No, not
>
> all the way, but did she keep me from being full fledged against it—what you can't
>
> have through the building. It's very, very detrimental when you have someone who
>
> is a big naysayer vocally. Saying to other staff this is ridiculous, we shouldn't be
>
> doing this, this doesn't make any sense, it is a waste of time, on and on. I remember
>
> what I was doing is kind of keeping my—the sense of who I am and my own
>
> personality and trying to incorporate some of the language that Mary wanted. After
>
> sitting down with her, I said, "Yeah, we can do that," which I probably wouldn't
>
> have been open enough to do otherwise. And so she did get me, certainly, not right
>
> on board with the train, but I definitely wasn't going the other way.

In summary, the words "team" and "family" were used in every interview. The

faculty members mentioned slogans that have now been written on banners and are

displayed in the Dodge River Middle School auditorium, gymnasium and hallways. One

banner displays the acronym TEAM with the words "Together Everyone Achieves

More." Another banner reads "We are family, we are one, we are DRMS" and was an

outcome of her philosophy that is being carried on by the new administration and staff

members and buttressed Mrs. North's ability to bring staff together toward a common

goal. A staff member summed it up:

> I remember lots of times we were talking about the Dodge River family, you
>
> know, that we were family. And sticking together and there to support each other

and always encouraging people to do that. The little informal gatherings outside of

school and stuff that helped people bond. I couldn't tell you how many times

I heard the word family at our school.

In addition to bringing the staff together as family, Mrs. North was seen as valuing

family by wanting the staff members to put their biological families first. She encouraged

them to take care of parents, children, or siblings when needed and would always "make

it work" when they needed to go to a funeral, regardless if it was family or another loved

one. Several teachers indicated this effort increased morale, strengthened their loyalty to

her, and was influential in their desire to follow her direction. The focus

group ended their conversation about Mrs. North's strengths with the comment,

I don't think you can separate the personal Mary from the professional Mary. I

mean, I think that's what makes her so unique. Everything that we've said about

her on a personal level is connected to the professional. And she's just so human

and so real. She's just real….It is who Mary is. It is the way she lives her life. In

my opinion her characteristics, her beliefs, her character, is the same in school as it

is out of school. It's who Mary is.

Encouraging Others to Contribute to Leadership

Mrs. North sought out teachers with strengths in various areas and encouraged

them to become leaders. She encouraged several staff members to apply for

administrative positions as they became available in the district. She also created

leadership positions within her own school building by asking teachers to lead

committees and teams. Mrs. North was conscious of the need for continuous training of staff members and explained how she encouraged those leaders:

> I sent people to trainings where a lot of the times other principals would go. I sent them. And so they would go and they would come back. Whether it was [teacher's name] who went away and learned about social studies curriculum and came back or [teacher's name] who went away and learned about the computers or [teacher's name] who went to the Interface conference, I just sent different people. They went away and brought stuff back. Then they would take on the leadership role and they actually presented things to the staff the new way we were expected to do things at that time. And they became many leaders within the school and when I left there were those leaders still there.

When asked if they were encouraged to contribute to the leadership of the building the focus group discussion included conversation such as, "She asked you to join in and to take control" and "she wanted you to be part of the district groups and committees so we would have a say in what was going on". Individuals also gave examples of how she encouraged their participation in leadership. One teacher reflected what many of the interviewees conveyed:

> She tried to get as many people involved in the leadership as she could….She tried to make everybody feel like they were a part of the big picture. And you really need to be….if you are part of the leadership you feel a lot more ownership of everything that's going on and you do a better job. She saw that and tried to find a place for everybody.

Another staff member described her experience by saying, "She needed me to be the leader of my grade level. It was a group with a lot of strong personalities and I think she needed me to help get them on board with the changes."

Another teacher described how Mrs. North handled a "tireless, enthusiastic, wonderful" teacher who was very excited about her position, passionate about education, and spent an inordinate amount of time coming to her office with ideas for new programs and activities.

> Mary's door was always open and so she would come in all the time. And they were good ideas, but you can't use every idea that people bring to you. I think she wasn't sure what to do with her and she was driving her nuts. She finally figured out this person needs specific jobs. She needs to be in a leadership role where she has responsibilities and she does have input. That helped a whole lot. It took her awhile to find that out.

In addition to encouraging staff members to become active in team leadership positions, Mrs. North also encouraged several staff members to apply for administrative positions within the district. One staff member, who is now an administrator, shared his experience:

> In a specific case she wanted me to apply for the assistant principal's job. More generally, working up to that, she would talk to me all the time and unfortunately a lot of my leadership responsibilities were through head coaching positions at the high school. But she encouraged me enough and always mentioned, you know, she would catch games or she would always tell me after she read an article or talked to

a student or a parent of someone I was coaching. If she ever had the opportunity to have a talk with somebody and they were praising, she shared that praise. At the building level, I know she did the same thing. She shared praise and gave praise whenever possible, you know. Although she may not have said "team" a lot, I always felt or sensed that it was a team. We were all in leadership roles, you know, in a way. We were all expected to be a team and do our best.

Another staff member who later became an administrator said,

I would try to do what she asked in my capacity. She wanted you involved. And with Mary, you just couldn't say "no." It was just one of those things where if you did say "no," she would encourage you to say "yes" so in my time there, I could not say "no."

When asked if he had ever felt taken advantage of his response was, "No, no, no, no. She just had a way of making you feel you could do it and boosting your self-confidence so that you wanted to do it if you could. She treated everybody that way."

All of the interviewees discussed Mrs. North's skill in making connections and taking the time to "make the walk" to draw people in to the activities and changes happening in her building. Several teachers discussed her ability to persuade people to consider new ideas by sitting with them on an individual basis, particularly ones who might otherwise be resistant. Although it was mentioned that she did not get everyone on board with new programs, she was successful at reducing the vocal negativity that otherwise may have infected the building.

Working with Students and Parents

Lessons that were learned from working alongside Mrs. North were informative in how to work with parents and students. Her leadership by example impacted staff members, both personally and professionally. Several members reflected that working for Mrs. North had made them better people by helping them to see the "shades of gray" when dealing with students and their parents. They were also encouraged to treat students as they would want their own child to be treated. A former administrator shared,

I think the most important thing that Mary taught me was that it's not a black and white world….You know, I did take Mary's place as assistant principal and Mary was more—she's always been a counselor but my focus was discipline over counseling but to tie the counseling in. And what I mean there is to make sure that we did our best with the children that were making mistakes in our building so that we all would take a good, hard look at the mistakes that that kid was making and try to help that kid instead of just saying, "Okay. We're going to put you in after school detention or in disciplinary suspension in school or out of school." You know, Mary really taught me, I think, one of the most important things that I ever learned in being a building administrator is treating that kid like you would want your child treated. So I would always read those referrals to the kids and if they were in agreement of the fact that they did that, by golly, we figured out the discipline. But if they weren't, I would always get up and I would take that walk and talk to the other people that might've been involved in that and to see actually what was going

on. Mary taught me to do that I think more so than anything, is to take that walk and

to do the talk that is necessary. To be that child advocate.

He continued with his experiences making connections outside the school building by

interacting with parents and students in their home environment.

I would also do home visits. I really enjoyed home visits because a lot of people

that had problems with the school, they had those problems and a lot of times not

their kids, so you had to sell the school to the parents to make sure that they

understood that it's not the school. It's all of us working together to try to figure out

how we could help the child. So that was really awesome and Mary helped me to do

that. I took away a lot of values that Mary was able to teach me. Mary helped me

tremendously with my philosophy on working with kids and I cherish that to this

day.

Several teachers reaffirmed that she helped them be more aware of how they disciplined

or treated a child and their parent. One teacher stated,

I remember an instance where I had a parent that was upset with me about

something I'd written on a ninth hour note….I remember that I guess I had worded

it where the parent kind of took offense. When Mary was talking to me about it she

said, "Well, could you have said this?" Or, "Could you have said that?" or

whatever. It really got me to thinking about how, you know, what's in my thinking

doesn't always come out when I write it and it doesn't come out the way I meant it.

And you really need to look at that. I think she did that a lot. She thought about,

"now how is this going to appear from different angles?"

Another member of the focus group added,

> She helped me learn to be more diplomatic. And so now if I ever have to write
>
> anything to a parent I read it like five times, like from their perspective, what does
>
> this sound like? I think that her leadership by example was pretty good for me.

Mrs. North encouraged staff to look at each day as an adventure and be willing to take risks and try new things. Staff repeatedly gave examples of how she helped them believe in themselves because she believed in them and how she showed that through her support. One teacher shared,

> You know, I think when you start out [teaching] you have tunnel vision. You go to
>
> school and you learn how it's supposed to be in the classroom and you get to the
>
> classroom and it isn't that way. And I think for the first few years that I was there,
>
> before Mary became principal, I thought everything had to go by the book. Well,
>
> when Mary came, Mary showed us that everything doesn't have to go by the book.
>
> She would always talk about us getting ready for a new adventure and every year
>
> was a new adventure and she would talk about the journey. She showed that you're
>
> going to walk in that classroom and the lesson plan that you have laid out may or
>
> may not take place and its okay if it doesn't. It's okay if it goes in a totally different
>
> direction. What fun! The children get excited. They know that you get excited and
>
> you want them to walk out of your classroom every day excited.
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> I can remember I would be doing some type of an experiment in the classroom
>
> and Mary's office was right next to my classroom. Different smells and sounds
>
> would come out of my classroom and she would come over just to find out what's

going on and she loved it because it got her out of the office, it got her engaged

back with the children which I truly think she missed being in the classroom. She

would come to my room as often as she could simply to get her little fix with the

kids. And so I think she taught me to always try and be as excited in my teaching as

I wanted the kids to be excited. She freed me up to be myself. She'd walk by my

room and the kids may not see her but I'd see her and she'd stand over by the wall.

She'd give me a little wink and thumbs up, like, "Keep going, keep doing it, keep

doing it."

Finally, another teacher stated,

After I got to the middle school and Mary became principal, I would say I became a

better teacher. She helped me be the best I could be. I wanted her to be proud of me

and I wanted to be proud of the educator that I was….I became a better listener with

her and I think I became a better teacher because she was so calm….She's a very

empathetic principal but yet she's a fair and firm principal…and she always knew

that there was more in you than you thought was in yourself.

The Effects of Gender

Mrs. North was the only female building level leader in the Dodge River School

District when she was hired as assistant principal, and later as principal. Dodge River did

have a female director of special services at the time and, in the past, had two female

elementary principals. The retired women principals were initially teaching principals

and later became full time building leaders. When Mrs. North was hired in her first

official leadership role, the district's superintendent, assistant superintendent and six

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building level leaders were male. Subsequently, the district has had multiple females in leadership positions and currently has four building level administrators and one central office level administrator who are female. At the time, there had not been any female upper grade level leaders in the Dodge River School District besides Mrs. North.

Early in the interview, before Mrs. North was asked about gender and leadership, she shared, "I almost didn't become assistant principal because some people on the board thought that a woman could not command authority, earn respect." Later, when asked if she thought gender was an issue with her leadership, she stated,

I think it was more of an issue outside of my building than in my building. There were probably some people, I think some of the men thought that I was going to do certain things and maybe I let them down because I didn't. I couldn't move mountains….I think, you know, in the very beginning of my principalship we had a very traumatic thing with our counselor and I think then people saw me as strong and decisive and I think that just probably set the tone….Nobody ever overtly disrespected me.

Mrs. North shifted her position and further commented:

Well, I did have one case where someone was disrespectful and there were two men in a meeting. After the meeting I went down and told them that was never to happen again and just set my tone right then with those two, which I couldn't believe I had to do that. So, you know, just because I wasn't as dictatorial or as strong as the person before me. I don't know. Maybe because I was a woman or maybe because

people just do that. Or maybe I was just over-sensitive but I took it as an affront. I just said something to let them know I was disappointed in them.

It was at the central office level that Mrs. North noticed what she believed to be gender bias. She and the special services director were the only two females at the district administrative meetings. She observed, "Others saw me at [district level] meetings and sometimes when I would say something, five minutes later a man would say the same thing and he just couldn't believe that they couldn't hear me." This same story was told later by one of the male teachers who observed this behavior at the meeting at central office:

Something bothered me one time real big. I do remember this specifically. We were at the central office and I was on a committee…there was a couple other male administrators there at the time and our superintendent was a male. I remember there was two or three other middle school employees there and they were talking and Mary had said, "This is what the middle school does," in so many words and it was kind of just ignored. Then, within probably a matter of minutes, it was rephrased by a male administrator in another building. The practices weren't even implemented or started in his building but he said, "Well, what if we try this?" The superintendent said, "Oh, well, that's just a great idea. Let's make a note of that," you know what I mean? And I think all of us kind of looked at each other and said, "Man, we've been—she just said that. We've been doing that," and it just kind of— there was times that I saw her leadership was overshadowed. And I don't know. I can't say it's because of just specifically gender. But I did notice it. I saw it with my

own eyes and I remember the physical posture of the man that said it. Like, he was—I can almost tell you which chair he was in—because it bothered me so bad I thought, "Man, this is asinine, this is dumb! This is ludicrous! She just said it!" It was almost to a point of, wow! You know, well, because he ignored her and then almost applauded the other guy for the same, almost verbatim idea.

The focus group shared several impressions that "it was not always a popular decision to hire her in the community due to her gender" because "that was such a different time period. At the time it was pretty unusual for an assistant principal to be a woman." One teacher also indicated, "Mrs. North had to walk miles to get what she wanted whereas they'd have just given it to one of the other guys [principals]." However, one female teacher said, "It was an extremely good thing for our building. She was quite a feminist, you know? I think she taught young girls to stand up for themselves without making violence or being obnoxious about it."

Consistently throughout the interviews, staff members alluded to gender being an issue outside the building at the central office level. Other than Mrs. North's attempt at building relationships with the men through learning about and drawing on their interests, respondents were not able to pinpoint any gender issues within the building. One male teacher responded,

Her personality did not affect her one bit inside those walls….Mary is not a pushover as a female in any regard. She farms, she rides horses….She's a hard worker…. I never looked at her as a female principal, I guess, when I was working for her. I never once thought, "Well, that's just because she's a woman." I never

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looked at that….But outside the walls when you went into where she's sitting in a group in Dodge River School district—then it was all males at the time. I do think that gender had a part as far as how much they listened, how much respect she got. I think it was gender.

When asked about gender affecting Mrs. North's leadership, a female teacher buttressed the male teacher's observations regarding the challenges Mrs. North experienced at the district level but further explained that, over the years, Mrs. North had built her reputation within the building, first as teacher, then counselor and assistant principal. Her longevity and ability to build relationships appeared to diminish any gender bias inside the middle school building that would create stereotypical responses or concerns. She shared,

I think it depends on which part of the school system you're talking about. I think if you are talking maybe school board, superintendent, assistant superintendent, I think Mary had to really, really prove herself. At the middle school, Mary was assistant principal when I came there. And as assistant principal, that's a tough job. When we would refer a student, Mary always talked to us first before the kid. And so she always knew why we wrote the referral…if a parent was upset and coming in she always knew what our perspective was before she talked to the parent or the kid. Again, Mary was building that relationship with us from the time she was assistant principal, from the time she was counselor, you know, and she was building that rapport, that trust, the respect with the faculty and it never wavered. I'm sure that it built and built and built and, I mean, the comfort level

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with Mary by the time she reached her principal's position, it wasn't like you were going into the principal's office. You know, you were going into Mary's office.

In addition, another male teacher who later became an administrator observed the gender bias outside the middle school building but reflected on the relationships she built over the years in the community and service to the students and staff as a support in reducing potential gender bias in the building.

Let's face it. When we were growing up the principals were male. Your superintendents and assistant superintendents were male. Mary was in a male world because of the fact of women not having the opportunity maybe that some men did. When she finally got her administrative job she wouldn't bring that up on a regular basis in front of staff or teachers, but I remember talking to her about those things and she felt that maybe sometimes male and females might've been treated differently…It was more of a [central office] administrative deal….I think it was just something that she felt and I think it put more pressure on her to be successful at what she did because of the fact that she was a woman. I didn't look at her like that. I don't know if other people looked at her like that but I think Mary put pressure on herself.

He continued, explaining the effects of her longevity in the community:

In the building, both of us were long [term employees]…you know everybody comes and goes whereas in Mary's place and my place we didn't come and go. We were there and so we knew the community, we knew the kids. You know, Mary more so than me because she was a Dodge River graduate and county resident all of

her life, so she knew everybody and everybody knew her and so that aspect of her being viewed as a good person was started very young in her life.

In conclusion, Mary's gender was observed by herself and staff to be a hindrance at the central office level. She may not have been heard as readily as her male counterparts and appeared to work harder than the other male administrators for what support she received from central office staff. However, she had established herself in the middle school building through her years in the position of teacher, counselor, assistant principal, and principal so that she faced fewer gender issues in the daily leadership of the middle school staff.

Challenges and Barriers

As with every leadership style, there are also barriers and concerns for those displaying servant leadership traits. When Mrs. North was asked to describe her own perceived barriers and concerns she shared,

> I think organization was my probably biggest challenge just because I'm not a terribly organized person. That almost kept me from getting positions all the way along. But in the end I got better and better. I think people who are very organized would've done it in half the time or at least a fourth of the time. You know, and I think my open door policy. That costs you time….You know, I'm probably a very average person and average people who take on positions like this pay a price because they're overachievers, so they have to work hard at it.

Mrs. North, when asked how she approached solving her organizational challenge, stated,

I think people helped me and I saw how people modeled [organization]. And I just

buckled down and did it because things would not work if you were not organized

and if you did not communicate and you did not do these things. Then all the things

you dreamed about would never happen.

Secondly, Mrs. North noted she could have felt challenged by all the information

and skills she had to learn as a new principal. However, she cited using her ability to

recognize other's strengths and create a "power with" school to overcome this barrier:

I think there was a challenge of learning all—knowing all of these things. But it

was not a real big challenge because you just tapped into all these very bright,

energetic people who were there for the same reason you were and they helped you.

So, you know, that was sort of an easy one….That didn't make me uncomfortable

that I didn't know everything.

Another challenge she saw as a barrier was gender. In addition to the incidents shared

in the prior section on the effects of gender issues, Mrs. North articulated,

I almost didn't become assistant principal because people on the board thought that

a woman could not command authority, earn respect. You know, what happened

when boys misbehaved, and I think that was a challenge being the first woman

principal at Dodge River Middle School….One board member said, "Well, what are

you going to do if there's a fight in the cafeteria?" I said, "I'll do what I always

have done." You try to intervene. You know, you're not going to jump right in the

middle of it. I mean, [another male administrator] leaped small tables in a single

bound and came over and jerked them apart. But, you know, most people do not do

that. There are other ways to break up a fight besides, you know, that really was never a problem.

She further stated,

Working with the male administrators who were above me and, you know, seemingly not respecting me sometimes….Once, when I was interviewed by a couple of superintendents, one was saying, "Well, you haven't done this," and I said, "Well, yes, I have." You know, you just had to always prove yourself. You saw other people not doing their jobs as told and that superintendent gave them recognition. I think I did my job…. But you know, God knows. You have to have some self-talk to keep yourself positive and not let yourself go those places.

Along with the negative gender bias came support from specific male mentors. Mrs. North relayed a story of one male assistant principal who encouraged her to go back to school to obtain her specialist degree and certification for administration. She stated, "I was very happy being a guidance counselor…but he seemed to think I had the necessary qualities to be a leader and assistant principal or principal." When this particular administrator left the district, Mrs. North was hired in his position. She also reported that she was hired by male administrators, one of whom prepared her for the interview to ensure her success in obtaining the position. In closing, she articulated, "In the end, the superintendent supported me wholeheartedly."

When asked about her family and personal time, Mrs. North believed she had sacrificed time and energy that she could have used for her own family. Although she

stated she had no regrets, she said she would encourage new leaders to take better care

of themselves and spend more time with their family.

A member of the focus group began the discussion about Mrs. North's challenges

by sharing, "She struggled with organization and she will tell you that—that organization

was her biggest flaw." They also discussed that she sought out specific, highly

organized staff members to help with organization.

Another member stated, "She gave too much of herself away." A discussion then

emerged about her open door policy and how it was difficult to find time to visit with

Mrs. North because she was always busy meeting with people. "She split herself up so

much you couldn't get to her unless you met her very early when she walked through the

doors in the morning." They also discussed the time and concern Mrs. North took in

making decisions. Besides gathering input, several focus group member shared "She

weighed everything…decisions would take her a long time...because she wanted to make

a smart decision" and "It's taken its toll on her because she worries so much….It's like

she has become the worrier for the entire Dodge River Middle School for a long period of

time…she takes on everyone's problems." One individual pointed out Mrs. North

including her spirituality in her decision making by sharing, "She'd say, 'I have to pray

about this,' or, you know, 'I'll pray about this and talk to you tomorrow.' She wasn't

afraid to say that to you."

Another teacher believed the time and effort Mrs. North spent on her position

eventually took its toll on Mrs. North. She stated,

Well, especially towards the end, her desire to process everything thoroughly and make the right decisions got her down. When she was new and things needed to be changed and things were changing, she'd make all these changes and then we'd be set. Well, things just kept coming and kept coming and kept coming and she got to the point where she was there for hours and hours and couldn't get to the bottom of a lot of it the way she wanted to. You know, she could do it, but you know how it is, when you want to do a good job, you want to do a good job. But there was really no way to do a good job the way she wanted to. And in the end, I think that is why she decided it was time to go.

In summary, the challenges and barriers faced by Mrs. North, as reported by her and the staff members, include her organizational skills, gender bias, and the time and energy it took to gather data to make decisions. The amount of time she put into her work also took a significant amount of time away from her family and personal life.

School Culture

In describing the culture of Dodge River Middle School while she was principal, Mrs. North shared, "Probably it was a family-oriented culture. Not probably. It was a family-oriented culture." She articulated how she encouraged and supported the family-oriented culture in several ways. Mrs. North stated "There were lots of slogans around the building supporting team and family…'We are family, we are one, we are Dodge River Middle School' and 'TEAM…Together Everyone Achieves More.' She further explained,

You wanted a safe place where students could learn, be happy, have fun, and that

they felt welcome…a place that they could build relationships with one another. A

place where teachers could feel comfortable and that they could feel like—I

probably gave them the gift that I didn't give myself, which was that their family

came first, and then this family. And I made that happen for them. You know, if

they were sick or if they needed to go do something I just made it happen, let it be,

and gave them the dignity to do it without—I think people remember that kind of

thing. So that was the kind of place that I wanted it to be. You know, where

everybody felt welcome and were able to grow in that setting.

Toward that end, Mrs. North reported a variety of activities, events, and celebrations

were planned and orchestrated for the students. She explained,

We had lots of events for the kids…everything from ice cream socials to Dodge

River Town, Dodge River Dollars, to Dodge Mustang assemblies, to [retired

teacher's name] awards for good citizenship and academics. Sports assemblies

recognizing that type of activity to academic teams and character education

assemblies in recognition of those kinds of people. I would have attended just about

everything except we divvied up the sports supervision because we had so many of

those….With the drug-free schools they went to camp for training at the lake for

leadership. So you had star leaders and different things.

Regarding her interaction with the staff and development of the family-oriented culture,

Mrs. North explained,

I made sure that I knew what was going on and if there were problems I encouraged

them to let me know so that together we could make sure that they were respected. I

just never let anybody stand out there alone no matter what it was. Whether it was

somebody going to court because something happened to them at school or it was a

family situation where I could be of help. You just went with people no matter what

the situation was if you could help them. You never left them alone.

She further explained how she impacted the culture of the middle school:

I think I was consistently who I was. I had integrity and I don't think anybody ever

questioned my integrity. I think the things you brought into the school, whether it

was a good citizen award or character education or drug-free schools and

communities, or mobile teen which held monthly dances for 150 plus kids. Having

those things on Saturday night for all the kids for months and months and months,

years and years. They were very time consuming but I think that everybody always

saw you as, you know, wanting to do what was best for people.

To show her appreciation to staff members, Mrs. North mentioned various ideas she

used during her tenure at Dodge River Middle School. She gave the faculty rewards of

small gifts of money, extra planning time shared between team members, notes and

words of praise. She also stated, "They liked it when you listened to them and tried to

make their idea work or whatever they were wanting to do, make it happen."

One member of the focus group began describing the culture of Dodge River

Middle School with one word, "family." Then others reinforced the statement by saying,

"Yes, family. A wonderful one." Another replied, "One that you were willing to go to school and you liked your job" and "the kids liked being there."

Throughout the interviews, every teacher mentioned the word "family." One staff member further stated,

> She wanted the atmosphere of family like I mentioned before. She wanted people to not feel intimidated. She wanted people to want to do their best and to want to serve the students the best….She had a totally different approach than her predecessor, you know. She would—I mentioned her newsletters, but, she was interested—if you wanted to come in and talk about somebody in your personal life that was causing you—or some kind of issue you had in your personal life she was very willing to listen to that, too.

Another male teacher who later became an administrator mentioned,

> We all felt like we worked in the best place ever, you know? We all felt lucky to work there for her. And that just indirectly spilled over into our students…through the enjoyment of our jobs and the way they saw us working together, talking or just carrying on in the hallways.

In addition to mentioning the family atmosphere, seven of the nine individuals mentioned how Mrs. North encouraged them to take care of their own family and worked at giving them the time necessary to take care of issues at home. One young teacher remembered,

> We knew she would want us to take care of our family so we would help out and cover someone if they needed to go home…so it promoted us to work as an

extended family. You know, it's not going to be a perfect world because it's not….I

mean, I am not trying to paint a utopia or anything. We had kids that would fight

and teachers that nagged at each other…but that's human mistakes. Knowing you

have black sheep in the family, there was an atmosphere of extended family

support.

Another faculty member shared,

Another situation was my mother-in-law had been elected for the Older Worker

Citizen of the Year and she had won the district around the Dodge River area,

Central District, and she was to be treated [to an awards gathering] in the capital

city for two days. She wanted me to take her down there. I went to Mary, I said,

"Mary, my mother-in-law's won this award. She doesn't want her son to take her,

she wants me to take her and be with her down there for two days….What am I

supposed to do?" She goes, "You're supposed to go. It's okay. We'll take care of

it. This is a special time. She wants you to go with her. She wants you to take her

down there, and so it's something special for her. We'll work around it." I said,

"Okay. So are these sick days or personal days?" She goes, "Don't worry. It's okay.

This is a special thing." It wasn't probably a year and a half later and [husband's

name] mom died. So—she was, you know, she's about family.

The culture of the school evolved throughout the time Mrs. North was principal.

One teacher who later worked as the assistant principal for Mrs. North articulated,

It just got better and better every year…we put up posters, and had special

recognition days every month. We visited with the kids and let them know the good

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things they were doing and maybe some of the concerns that we might have. The

building was very happy with the leadership team and so Dodge River was always a

very positive—extremely positive during—in my eyes during those years.

Finally, a veteran teacher summed up the culture of Dodge River Middle School:

Caring. It was caring all the way, you know, and team. She wanted everybody to be

a team and not to compete against each other but to work for the good of the school.

On testing, on everything. And the kids loved her. You know, she learned the

names of everybody in the school. She just did. She spent so much time there and

she was also caring about the cafeteria staff, custodians, everybody. Mary brought

us under one family umbrella and we all knew that. It was understood.

Summary

This investigation focused on a female principal of a middle school in the Midwest

who had served her home district for 33 years. The purpose of this research was to

examine the behaviors exhibited by the female servant leader in a public education

setting and gain an understanding of how her behavior and the culture of the building

were perceived by her and the staff directly under her supervision.

Using qualitative analysis, data were collected through individual and focus group

interviews, using open-ended and semi-structured questions. The interviews were

recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed using open and axial coding. Data were also

collected through the use of school newsletters, board minutes, teacher evaluations,

newspaper articles, and personal notes. Chapter Five includes the summary of findings,

discussion, implication for practice and, recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The servant-leader *is* servant first….It begins with the natural feeling that one

wants to serve, to serve *first*. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead.

He is sharply different from the person who is *leader* first, perhaps because of the

need to assuage an unusual power drive or to acquire material possessions.

The difference [between servant leadership and other leadership styles] manifests

itself in the care taken by the servant – first to make sure that other people's

highest priority needs are being served. The best test, and difficult to administer,

is: do those served grow as persons; do they, *while being served*, become

healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become

servants? (Greenleaf, 2008, p. 15)

Servant leadership, a growing movement developed by Robert Greenleaf in his

effort to promote a "better kind of leadership" (Greenleaf, 2003, p. 16), is a model that

puts serving others as its first priority. In the introduction to Greenleaf's *The Servant*

Leader Within (2003) Spears stated, "Servant-leadership emphasizes increased service to

others, a holistic approach to work, promoting a sense of community, and the sharing of

power in decision making" (p. 16). In the same introduction, *Fortune Magazine* was

noted as stating,

Servant-leadership works like the consensus building that the Japanese are famous

for. Yes, it takes a while on the front end; everyone's view is solicited, though

everyone also understands that his view may not ultimately prevail. But once the consensus is forged, watch out: With everybody on board, your so called implementation proceeds wham-bam. (Greenleaf, 2003, p. 25)

The purpose of this study was to examine the practices and behaviors of a servant leader in a public school setting. This chapter includes a summary of the findings as related to the research questions; a discussion of the findings as they relate to the literature review on servant leadership, women as leaders, and cultural environment of a public school setting; implications for further research; and conclusion.

<div align="center">Emergent Themes</div>

Throughout the study, the researcher simultaneously analyzed data to uncover themes as they emerged. Between interviews, the questions were reviewed and refined for relevancy. The four themes that evolved were spirituality, family, bringing out the best in people, and teamwork.

Spirituality

Mrs. North's life path was directed toward spirituality and service at a very early age. She received her education, from primary school throughout college, at parochial schools. The indoctrination of her faith began during her early childhood years through the direction of her family's religious background. While attending Catholic elementary and high school, she participated in Mass and attended chapel on a regular basis. Mrs. North later chose to attend a Catholic university where she further deepened her relationship with God. While attending St. Mary's, she chose to enter the convent and

remained a member for seven years. Mrs. North's training as a Sister of Mercy during her time at the convent strengthened her skills in service and compassion for others.

Throughout her life, Mrs. North has relied on her faith for strength and direction. When observing an event that went unnoticed by other leaders, Mrs. North's response was, "Well, God knows," making it obvious that God's judgment was more important to her than the recognition by her peers. She also mentioned, when asked about her interests outside of school, her family and time with God. Spirituality was integral to Mrs. North's character and in describing her essence.

The staff at Dodge River Middle School was also aware of Mrs. North's faith and her reliance on it for direction and support. They did not believe she "pushed" her faith on them but heard her talk about her "prayer service" at home and knew she used meditation time for reflection and clarifying solutions to school challenges. It brought comfort to the staff knowing that she would pray for them during difficult times such as illnesses or family deaths. They became acutely aware of the strength and calm her faith had cultivated during a tragedy early in her administrative tenure. They believed her response to the situation "set the tone" for her administration as a strong, decisive leader.

Family

The second theme to emerge was that of family. Mrs. North was the oldest child in a family with eight children. She, by nature of being the oldest, felt a responsibility toward her younger siblings. At the age of 25, she became the matriarchal figure to her own family when her mother died leaving several younger siblings still at home. Mrs. North left the convent and came home to care for her mother, her family, and to help out

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on the farm. She later transferred the skills she developed as a caring, older sibling into her work environment.

At work, Mrs. North emphasized family. She made certain that staff had time to care for their families and she also encouraged a family atmosphere at school, describing it as a place "where everyone felt safe and wanted to be." This was supported by the large banners in the school that read, "We are family, we are one, we are Dodge River Middle School."

Teachers reminisced about times Mrs. North would tell them to take time to care for family members. They also shared that she wanted them to help each other out by stepping into classrooms so teachers could take time as needed to care for their families. This fostered a culture of caring and the staff responded by giving back whenever they were needed. Mrs. North regularly followed up with questions of concern about family illnesses or other situations and also asked about staff members' children and their activities. By doing this, staff believed she showed a personal interest in their family and their well-being. It was as if Mrs. North had her arms wrapped around the entire school.

Mrs. North's selflessness was obvious as she supported her staff and their families. In addition to the many hours she spent at work, she appeared to be "everywhere." She attended functions after school, not only those that were school related but those of staff family celebrations or other events. Mrs. North made visits to the hospital to check on faculty members and would "just show up at the door" in times of crises. Her concern for the staff was evident, particularly due to her "just being there." Although her words may have been few, her presence was powerful.

Bringing Out the Best in Others

The third theme to evolve was Mrs. North's skill at bringing out the best in people. This ability began with her capacity to recognize the strengths people brought with them to the workplace. Mrs. North worked alongside the staff for many years as a teacher and counselor and took time to observe their skills and areas where they displayed giftedness. She was also thorough in her hiring process and was dedicated to hiring those who would work well with the existing staff.

In addition, Mrs. North was seen as very persuasive. Rather than using coercive power, she would personally approach staff members and, considering their abilities or interests, suggest they attend a workshop to learn new skills. She would then have those staff members, upon return, train others in their new found areas of expertise. These teacher-led presentations added to the credibility of new programs and convinced others to join their staff members in accepting change. The staff trusted Mrs. North and believed if she asked them to do something they could do it. Their motivation was based on their respect for her and the relationship between them. In addition, they observed her willingness to work alongside them. One teacher explained her motivation to comply with Mrs. North's request by stating, "She earned it, that's why. She would do anything for you, so you wanted to do anything for her."

When the task was accomplished, Mrs. North showed her gratitude by giving credit to the teachers and would also put notes of appreciation in their mailboxes or thank them personally in the hallway or classroom. This served to build confidence in the teachers' ability and the desire to help out their school when asked again.

Teamwork

The last theme was one of teamwork. When Mrs. North became principal, she shifted the culture from one of competition to one of teamwork. Teams were developed across grade levels and curriculum areas and teachers were given time to work together to develop ideas and strategies for their classrooms. The intent was for all teachers, both new and veteran, to share ideas and improve the overall educational experience for their students.

In addition, Mrs. North was seen as a "consensus builder" or one with a collaborative style of leadership. It was remarkable that she took the time necessary to gather input from staff to aid her in making the best possible decision for the staff and students of Dodge River Middle School. This collaborative effort was very time consuming and frustrated some staff members who wanted a quicker decision or wanted to be told what to do. However, staff also mentioned being appreciative of having a voice in decisions that impacted their teaching and admitted, in the end, that it worked out for the best. One teacher stated, "She always wanted our input. So you always knew that she respected what you said but you also knew that she was determined to make the right decision and follow through with it….And it was for everybody." It was also noted that Mrs. North wanted the middle school to be on the "cutting edge" of education and she organized the teams at the middle school and had them working collaboratively years before the district incorporated the Professional Learning Community model, consisting of collaborative teams in all the district's buildings with time made for sharing between teachers.

In closing, the negligibility of gender issues was noteworthy. Although the researcher was interested in the impact of a female as servant leader, bias due to Mrs. North's femaleness was not prominent enough to be considered a major theme. Mrs. North did experience what appeared to be gender bias outside of her building at the central office level. Staff members were aware that she had taken a back seat to male administrators at times in meetings and believed the middle school experienced less support than the buildings led by male administrators. However, her gender did not appear to be of significance within the middle school building. Her years as an employee within the building, time as a counselor interacting closely with teachers, the relationships she built as a vice principal, and her fair and consistent treatment of students and staff appeared to diminish any gender bias she might have otherwise experienced. The teachers also noted her high level of integrity and authenticity and believed gender was not a factor in her leadership abilities inside the walls of Dodge River Middle School.

Discussion of Findings

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of a servant leader in a public education setting. The review of literature on servant leadership revealed a transformative leadership style that seeks to strengthen and develop professionals and utilize their skills to enhance programs and organizational culture.

When the researcher consulted with four career educators searching for a servant leader for a qualitative case study, their responses revealed the name of a female principal of a Midwestern middle school multiple times. This led the researcher to review

literature information on women as leaders, in addition to the literature on servant

leadership and school culture.

When Mrs. North was approached regarding her willingness to participate in the

case study, she was initially hesitant to participate. Her hesitancy was later paralleled by

the staff description of her as a private person and one who would rather give credit to

others than take credit for herself. She was also concerned that she might not have

"enough words" to fully explain her role at Dodge River Middle School. Her quiet, calm

nature was also later noted by the teachers who explained that Mrs. North could get her

point across with a look or a brief statement. Mrs. North indicated that "counseling traits"

and "listening" were some of her strengths, which were also later confirmed by the staff.

Her quiet and private demeanor made it challenging, at times, for the researcher to get in-

depth responses to the interview questions. However, during the initial conversation, Mrs.

North shared a portion of her meditation journal with the researcher of a writing activity

she had recently completed. She was asked to list her strengths. Mrs. North had listed

listening, empathy, and healing or helping others solve their problems. These three traits

listed were the first three traits of a servant leader as defined by Spears (2004). The

journal entries, which were completed prior to the initial visit without formal knowledge

of the literature on servant leadership, served to reinforce the selection of Mrs. North as a

strong candidate for the case study.

Spirituality

In Mrs. North's self-description, she portrayed herself as a family-oriented person with an extensive background in religious training. She was educated from kindergarten through her undergraduate degree in Catholic schools. She continues to practice her faith in her daily living. Autry (2001) suggested, "spirituality…is one of the philosophical bases of servant leadership" (p. 1).

Mrs. North's reliance on her spiritual beliefs and religious background to guide her day-to-day decisions was an integral part of her leadership style and was noticed by staff members. Several teachers mentioned that she had a spiritual strength and would say, "I'll pray about this and talk to you tomorrow." Because teachers were aware of her time in the convent and belief in God, the researcher observed an expectation from staff that Mrs. North used her spirituality in day-to-day situations. Several descriptions included Mrs. North's use of her "nun face" to relay information or privately, in the midst of tense situations, she would "cross herself and made statements such as 'Hail, Mary'."

A particularly poignant memory of a crisis, involving the tragic death of a teacher's child, which plagued the building at the beginning of her principalship, was summed up by a focus group member stating, "She really had a strength about her, you know, very spiritual, that helped us all make it through. Had we not had her for an administrator, I think our building would have fallen apart." Another added,

> We were sitting there, shaking. All of these adults because we had just witnessed
> something that you should only hear on national news. And a kind of calm came

over us after she talked. And I know it shook her to the core. But that's the kind of leadership you need.

Although she did not thrust her faith on staff, there was an awareness of her belief in God and knowledge that she practiced her faith in conjunction with her work. Harris, Ballenger, and Jones (2007) indicated, "educational leaders must assess all actions, decisions, and ideas through a critical lens of spirituality, measured by the standards of ethical, moral, just, caring, equity, fairness, and democracy" (p. 4). According to the staff at Dodge River Middle School, Mrs. North demonstrated these leadership traits as their principal.

Mrs. North also shared with the researcher that she has daily meditation time or, in her words, "my prayer service" at her home. She shared several activities from her meditation journal as well as the book she was currently reading entitled *Jesus, CEO: Using Ancient Wisdom for Visionary Leadership*. Mrs. North continues to develop her relationship with God and seeks to better know herself through Biblical studies. Covey (1989) shared the need for servant leaders to do "inner work," and that spirituality contributes in an essential way to a leader's vision.

In summarizing one of her answers regarding gender bias, Mrs. North stated that she needed to have "self-talk" to keep from focusing on the negative things that had happened to her based on what she believed was due to her gender. She ended the statement, "Anyway, God knows." It was apparent that Mrs. North, rather than succumbing to the judgment from those around her, relied on her faith to stay positive during difficult times in her leadership.

There continues to be an increasing amount of research on servant leadership and spirituality. Spirituality as a significant theme was an unexpected finding for the researcher because the research was conducted with employees of a public school. Current research on spirituality in public school education may not be as plentiful due to federal laws requiring separation of church and state. However, faith and spirituality emerged as a significant factor for Mrs. North, as stated by her and observed by the faculty.

Building Family and Community

Research by Harris, Ballenger, and Jones (2007) indicated building community as a particular strength of women in leadership. They stressed, "Developing a sense of community was a guiding, passionate vision that grew out of an almost spiritual desire to bring people together. The goal in every case was to make education better for children" (p. 7). Mrs. North shared many ways she worked to build a supportive family atmosphere and increase the feelings of community within Dodge River Middle School. When asked to describe her style of leadership she reported she was a "consensus builder" and that she relied on the teams of faculty she had established to provide input and direction for the building. From the beginning of her tenure as principal, she emphasized that she valued cooperation over competition between staff members. The staff was encouraged to support each other in times of personal need and to support each other as professionals. Bringing people together and building successful teams within a working community increases the productivity and accountability of an institution. Lencioni (2002) stated, "There is nothing like the

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fear of letting down respected teammates that motivates people to improve their performance" (p. 213). Furthermore, Lencioni purported the feeling of community increases retention of employees and the likelihood that the collective goals will be met.

Although team meetings reportedly took a significant amount of time, a feeling of community and family grew out of these collaborative gatherings. Staff indicated they knew their purpose was to find ways to make whatever they did at their school the best for the students. They also felt more "buy-in" on proposed changes when they were challenged to learn new materials and present them to their peers.

The importance Mrs. North placed on family was palpable throughout the research process. Not only did she want to develop a family atmosphere for the faculty and students at Dodge River, she also expected staff to take time necessary to take care of their families. Whereas Burke (2002) noted with the either/or standard of personal/professional roles, family commitments can be seen as a liability, Mrs. North implemented policies that ensured staff was able to take care of their families.

The need for family-friendly work places was documented throughout the literature, especially regarding women in the workplace (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Eckman, 2004). Lack of balance between personal and professional responsibilities can reduce job satisfaction and ability to focus on work, as well as be a struggle for employees with leaders who do not take personal family needs into consideration (Sherman, 2000). Mrs. North demonstrated her understanding for supporting family through the care she

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provided to her own family, as well as caring for staff. Through Mrs. North's support,

faculty experienced increased job satisfaction with a leader who helped them balance the

requirements of their personal lives with the expectations of their professional lives.

As you enter Dodge River Middle School, you will see banners stating, "We are

family, we are one, we are DRMS." These banners are also displayed in the auditorium

where student celebrations were held to show appreciation for the academic, athletic, and

citizenship accomplishments of all students. Celebrations were held on a regular basis

where the student body met together to embrace the achievements of both faculty and

students. These celebrations helped to enforce the family-oriented atmosphere Mrs. North

envisioned for the middle school.

Professional and Personal Growth of People

Mrs. North recognized the potential in staff and regularly offered them

opportunities for growth. Spears (2002) stated, "The servant-leader is deeply committed

to the growth of each and every individual within the institution" (p. 15). Mrs. North was

cognizant that each person had different strengths and made the effort to help all

employees develop their personal and professional skills to reach their potential. She

indicated that she sent staff to many professional development seminars and workshops.

She stated that she felt the responsibility to be in attendance in the middle school building

as its leader and would send staff for professional development rather than attend herself.

Teachers were held accountable for the materials presented at the training events. This

demonstrated her belief that she had capable teachers and it gave them the responsibility

to learn new skills and report their findings back to the faculty. Greenleaf (2008) asserted,

"An institution [should] start on a course toward people-building with leadership that has a firmly established context of *people first*. With that, the right actions fall naturally into place" (p. 41).

Mrs. North realized the development of people was one of her highest callings and that successes at Dodge River Middle School would come through the efforts of the staff members. Maxwell (1993) asserted that "leaders who continue to…bring growth to their organizations will influence many and develop a successful team around them" (p. 180). Mrs. North was responsible for the development of many teams at the middle school and several staff members alluded to her leaving a very capable staff who could continue toward the common goals upon her retirement. Within each team, teachers were expected to lead. This gave teachers opportunities to serve in leadership positions and hone skills necessary should they later step into an administrative position. Several teachers, one who later became an administrator, told how Mrs. North approached them individually and encouraged them to apply for administrative positions within the district. One staff member said, "She always knew there was more in you than you thought was in yourself." Another teacher summed up how Mary encouraged growth of staff within the building:

> When she had whatever needed to be taken care of, she went to those people who had the strength there, so that everybody got included at some point and gave them control. Whereas, lots of times you don't feel like you have any, she'd find somebody and say, "Well, why don't you do this?" and gave the credit to the teacher. She never took it for herself. And I had worked for principals that you did

all the work and then they took all the glory, you know? She would never do that. She always celebrated the teachers.

In addition, Spears (2002) articulated that taking personal interest in ideas, taking suggestions from everyone, and encouraging worker involvement in decision making are steps that leaders can take in the development of staff. One staff member stated, "She was very determined to see the big picture, to get input from every single person in the building, everybody. Whatever their area, she wanted their input. And she wanted to make the best decision based on that input." Mrs. North displayed the ability to listen and validate ideas from staff. She also took the time to consult with teachers before making decisions. Several teachers indicated that whether Mrs. North used their idea or not, they always knew they were heard and felt that Mary valued their opinions. Although some frustration was evident at the time it took for Mrs. North to make decisions, staff readily understood that it was partly due to the time it took to gather input from the staff and weigh the options before choosing what she believed was best for the students.

Finally, Mrs. North encouraged personal growth of staff through her personal contact and praise of faculty members for tasks accomplished or how they handled a student or parent. Her encouragement was evident in hand-written personal notes and comments on evaluations shared with the researcher by staff. Teachers also reported that Mrs. North frequently gave verbal praise or commented on specific accomplishments of staff. These words of encouragement gave teachers the courage they needed to take on new responsibilities and learn new skills. One teacher said, "She wanted me to write

curriculum. I didn't know anything about it but she said I would be good at it and sent me to the workshop anyway. And, you know, I learned and got the job done."

In summary, Mrs. North encouraged the personal and professional growth of the staff at the middle school by sending them for training, expecting them to become peer teachers, and allowing them to lead within the school. However, her greatest impact in staff growth may have been that employees felt validated, that their input mattered, and through her praise and encouragement, saw they had potential that they may not have otherwise recognized.

Gender Bias

Throughout the literature on women in leadership, gender bias was a common theme. In education and business alike, researchers agreed it is an "androcentric, male-centred society" (Sherman, 2000, p. 135), and men are placed in positions of authority because their historical reproductive competitiveness has hard-wired them for aggression necessary for leading. Therefore, women must be better prepared, be more knowledgeable and have stronger credentials than their male counterpart to be seen as effective leaders (Gardella & Haynes, 2004; Harris, Ballenger, & Jones, 2007; Jamieson, 1995).

Although Mrs. North had established herself as a teacher and counselor in the Dodge River School District for 20 years before she applied for an administrative position, she recognized gender bias at various times throughout her employment. Mrs. North believed that most of the Dodge River Middle School faculty had seen how she interacted with staff and students and were supportive of her in the position as principal.

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While she did not believe her gender affected her leadership within the middle school setting, Mrs. North recognized the questioning of her abilities because she was a woman from the central office level. When she interviewed to be an administrator, several board members and the superintendent were concerned with issues such as how she would handle discipline in the building and if she would have the ability to settle a physical fight between older, bigger male students. Mrs. North stated that she had to prove herself verbally and reminded her superiors that she had handled difficult situations in the past.

Mrs. North shared a story about a meeting held at central office as an example of how she believed her gender played a role in her perceived leadership ability. She was at a meeting with all male administrators and a few of the middle school staff members. In the meeting, Mrs. North shared a new practice that the middle school staff had recently initiated that she believed would be an asset to the other buildings. After she shared the process, another male building administrator restated the process and it was lauded by the superintendent and made note of for further consideration. Mrs. North stated that she did not comment on what had taken place but made eye contact with middle school staff at the meeting and realized they noticed what had transpired. Later, a male teacher repeated the same story to the researcher with disbelief at how the comment from Mrs. North had been ignored, yet heralded as a positive potential change when it was restated by a male administrator. He was particularly aghast at the discussion since the process was already in place and deemed successful at the middle school but the male administrator had mentioned it as a good idea for future implementation. This incident paralleled the studies by Gardella and Haynes (2004) and Sherman (2000) where male-led administrative

meetings are often described as top-down, a dissemination of information where women feel ignored and isolated from discussion. They reported that women felt "invisible" when ideas, initially presented by women, become credible only after they are restated or promoted by the male members of the gathering. Sherman also acknowledged that although women believe they can speak at male dominated meetings, some choose to remain silent, believing their comments are neither considered nor pursued. In this situation, rather than speak up after the male presented the same idea, Mrs. North chose to make eye contact with the other employees and let the discussion end. In summary, Mrs. North stated, "So, that's just how it was and…every once in awhile, you would think about it."

At the end of her tenure as principal, Mrs. North acknowledged she had full support of the superintendent. She also recalled two other male administrators who had encouraged her to apply for the administrative positions she later filled. One was the assistant principal she replaced, who encouraged her to go back to school to complete her education specialist degree in administration so she would be prepared to take his position when he left. The other male was the superintendent in office when she applied to move from counselor to assistant principal. He prepared her for the board interview with some practice questions to help ensure her success. This example was supported in the literature by the reports of when a highly respected male administrator or key leader takes an interest in mentoring a female colleague, she is more likely to be noticed and experience an increase in her social capital (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Harris, Ballenger, & Jones, 2007).

Stakeholder Perceptions

Collaborative Decision-Making

The review of leadership revealed women may naturally exhibit characteristics of servant leadership. Women as school administrators report strengths in the areas of communication, collaboration, and community building (Jablonski, 1996; Jamieson, 1995). When asked about her style of leadership, Mrs. North initially gave a very succinct answer of "consensus building." The staff from Dodge River Middle School frequently mentioned Mrs. North's desire to gather input from staff before making decisions that would affect the staff and students. One member replied,

> Mary's leadership is a collaborative leadership. She always wanted to make sure
> that the pros and cons were all put on the table before a decision was made, so she
> wasn't authoritarian by any means. She was very collaborative and we all felt very
> comfortable knowing that Mary would listen to what we had to say and would
> consider it as a possibility. She liked and respected your thoughts and your voice
> regardless of who it might be, whether it be me who was the closest one to work
> with her during the time when she was principal or if it was a kid or a teacher.

Her ability to listen was also noted as part of her decision-making style. Several teachers commented, "But I tell you what, she was always, always willing to listen, even if what she decided wasn't what you wanted" and "She was the best listener I ever knew. She would listen to everybody before she made a decision." Spears (2004) stated servant leaders make a "deep commitment to listening intently to others" (p. 13). Collins (2001) and Yukl (2006) further indicated transformational leaders consulted with staff to

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discover areas of need in their district and included staff in finding solutions fitted to their

particular circumstances. It is also the responsibility of a good listener to determine the

will of the group and to clarify that through further communication (Spears, 2004).

It was obvious that Mrs. North paid close attention to and involved front line employees

in reform planning and implementation.

Some staff members expressed frustration with collaborative decision-making,

citing the amount of time it took to make a decision as the down-side of the process. One

teacher explained,

> I just got frustrated at times because I needed an answer…and it took time for her to
>
> make the decision because she was making sure she heard all the sides or opinions
>
> before she made that final call. I mean, it worked in the end. It was for the best but
>
> it just took a long time.

Another focus group member followed up:

> Although I liked her style better than the ADHD administrator mode that, you
>
> know, says "Well, let's make a decision. Oh, now we better think about it. That
>
> wasn't such a good decision—well it's too late now." Or then they would change it
>
> again.

Every staff member interviewed mentioned either Mrs. North's ability to listen or to

ask for input before making a decision. It was an integral part of her leadership style.

Use of Persuasion

The awareness of others' potential and persuasion were used by Mrs. North to

facilitate personal and professional growth in her staff and encourage participation of

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employees to contribute toward common goals. She first began by recognizing potential and strengths in others then skillfully used persuasion to encourage them to contribute to their teams by developing those strengths. Spears (2002) suggested the servant-leader recognizes that each person in his organization has worth beyond his work contributions and does everything possible to help all employees develop their personal, professional, and spiritual abilities to reach their potential as a contributing member of society.

Persuasion has been described as "sharing reasons and rationale, making a strong case for your position or desire while maintaining genuine respect for followers' ideas and perspective…staying in the communication process until mutually beneficial and satisfying outcomes are reached" (Covey, 1990. p. 107). Spears (2004) described persuasion as seeking "to convince others rather than coerce compliance" (p. 14). The art of persuasion includes listening, empathy, and acceptance (Autry, 2001; Bennis, 2002; Degraaf, Tilley, & Neal, 2004; Greenleaf, 2008).

Various staff members reported that Mrs. North had the advantage of having long term relationships with staff when she was employed as principal. She had worked in the district for over 20 years and at Dodge River Middle School for nearly the same amount of time when she became principal. She had observed the strengths of teachers and employees and had built trusting relationships that allowed her to persuasively encourage the professional and personal growth of others.

Staff members appeared to be awed at times with Mrs. North's ability to "let them have her way." They indicated she was not an authoritarian or coercive leader, but used

the strength of the relationships she built and her conversant style of communication to encourage staff to contribute to the good of all. Several in the focus group echoed one teacher's declaration, "We did it for Mary. We didn't question it, we just did it. I am not sure why." Another followed up with, "She earned it, that's why. She would do anything for you, so you wanted to do anything for her."

One teacher stated, "While Mary was there, I couldn't say no to her." Another mentioned, "She could get me to do things I didn't think I could do. She was never forceful, she could just convince me that I could do it, and since Mary said I could, I guessed I could." Showkeir (2002) suggested "Persuasive power creates opportunities and alternatives so individuals can choose and build autonomy" (p. 153).

The term persuasion is closely linked with the word influence in leadership terminology. Using persuasion and influence, servant leaders seek to build consensus (Burkhardt & Spears, 2004; Degraaf, Tilley, & Neal, 2004; Greenleaf, 2008). Throughout history, leaders have made changes by using "persistent persuasion" (Greenleaf, p. 30) to alter thoughts or direction, not usually with large groups, but rather convincing one person at a time. Servant leaders, such as Mrs. North, recognized the strength of persuasion over coercion, of interpersonal relationships and "making the walk" to assist staff members in their personal and professional growth.

Gender Bias

In the staff description, Mrs. North experienced gender bias within the Dodge River School District, but not inside the middle school building. They attributed the lack of gender related issues within the building to her longevity and the relationships she built

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during her tenure as teacher and counselor. One male teacher also described her personality and hobbies as ones that defied stereotypical gender issues by stating, "You didn't see Mary as a pushover as a female in any regard. She farms, she rides horses, boats….So it's not like she's dainty. She's a hard worker."

When asked about possible gender issues, the majority of the staff seemed taken aback and would respond that they had not noticed any. However, when the researcher asked about any bias in the community or outside the building, all respondents referred to her relationship to the otherwise all male administrative team, with one teacher saying, "She wasn't a good ole' boy." Staff mentioned that Mrs. North had to "walk twice as far to get what she wanted" than the male administrators. They stated Mrs. North did not talk about the discrepancies but they were aware due to the differences in what buildings were given for staff and budgetary support. They also noted some concern in the community because of attitudes regarding women as school administrators in the 1980s and that there had not been any other female principal at the middle school or high school levels in Dodge River at that time.

According to Eagly and Carli (2007), Harris, Ballenger, and Jones (2007), and Logan (1998), men are more associated with leadership traits and rights, whereas women are associated with compassionate traits, lacking masculine personality characteristics that would otherwise allow them to be effective leaders. Although Jablonski (1996) purported "our expectations for leadership by women need to be congruent with expectations of leadership by men" (p. 249), Sherman (2000) stated "remaining true to

women's ways of doing things rather than attempting to assume a male orientation" (p. 142) was of importance to women in leadership positions and the schools they led. One example of remaining true to her gender was expressed by a focus group member saying, "She was quite a feminist, you know? I think she taught young girls to stand up for themselves without making violence and getting obnoxious about it."

Congruent with Mrs. North's leadership, Grogan (1996) reported that women used alternative approaches to leadership, intertwined their personal and professional lives inextricably, and resisted discouragement. In addition, preferences for democratic rather than autocratic styles and organizations that are inclusive and collaborative were readily recognized by women (Eagly, Karau, & Johnson, 1992; Irby & Brown, 1995; Shakeshaft, 1987). As reported by the staff, Mrs. North used a "power with" approach, unlike her male predecessor's "power over" tactics. Teachers also noted that her character strengths and professional strengths were intertwined and she was constantly "who she was" both inside and outside of school. "No Jekyll and Hyde with her. She was always the same."

Research has identified multiple differences in leadership strategies of men and women (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Grogan, 2003; Harris, Ballenger, & Jones, 2007; Jamieson, 1995; Sherman, 2000). According to Sherman, "The elements of leadership that most consistently inform a female administrative style include an emphasis on establishing relationships with others in an attempt to build community…" (p. 133). Throughout all aspects of the research, Mrs. North's collaborative, community building techniques were noted in artifacts and by all staff members.

Selflessness

The focus Mrs. North placed on the needs of her staff and students was defined by the staff as an act of selflessness. Servant leadership encourages leaders to become servants first, prioritizing on the needs of their stakeholders. Spears (2004) articulated, "Servant-leadership, like stewardship, assumes first and foremost a commitment to serving the needs of others" (p. 15). The staff noticed that Mrs. North spent many hours at work, including late evenings and weekends, giving time that could have been spent on personal duties and family to the leadership tasks at school. It was also noted that Mrs. North attended many events and personal celebrations for the staff and their family members outside the school. Teachers believed this showed how Mrs. North cared for them as people first, then as employees. Several interviewees reported that she was a caring person who was interested in the "whole person," both with students and staff.

Servant leadership, a form of transformational leadership, shifts the focus from the leader to the needs of the followers and creates change for the betterment of all. According to Burns (1978), this leadership style "ultimately becomes moral in that it raises the level of human conduct and ethical aspiration of both leader and led, and thus has a transforming effect on both" (p. 20). When the Dodge River employees saw their leader interested in the good of the whole, both inside and outside school, they were motivated to work toward their professional goals alongside their leader.

Much of the time, Mrs. North served the staff and students in a quiet, behind the scenes way. She did not require recognition but in the words of one teacher, "She would never take the credit for herself. She always celebrated the teachers." Research suggests

the true servant leader often leads without pomp or fanfare. Many may not readily notice the work of the servant leader. Greenleaf (2003) described this phenomenon by stating, "They do not see the servant-leadership in action…. And that may be the fundamental key. Effective servant-leaders can be so subtle about it that all anybody is likely to see is the result. They don't see the cause" (p. 151). Although Mrs. North was visible at school and other events, she was there in the crowd as one of the Dodge River "family." The staff remembered her as being "always there" in difficult times, as well as for social gatherings. Mrs. North buttressed this by describing how she would go to visit teachers in the hospital after a medical procedure or to an employee's home after a death in their family. She attended weddings and funerals. She would also go to court appointments to support the staff members and stated, "I encouraged them to let me know if there were problems.…I just never let anybody stand out there alone no matter what it was."

Servant leaders empathize with and walk in the shoes of the followers, or those being led (Spears, 2002; 2004). They promote change by choosing to serve first through listening to those around them, being empathic toward needs, and investing in their staff members. Mrs. North exemplified these behaviors when she chose to "make the walk" when staff members were in need of support and comfort. Her selflessness in her leadership role was summarized in research by Greenleaf (2008) when he explained, "the difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant – first to make sure that other people's highest priority needs are being served" (p.15).

In closing her interviews, Mrs. North was asked what advice she would give young, upcoming administrators. She replied,

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I would tell them to take care of themselves. To take care of their family. And to

use those same traits to take care of their school and to lead their school. But I

would also tell them that it is big and so consuming….You have to keep the focus

on your agenda and what you think is best and don't let these other things suffer

because in the end you won't be as an effective leader if you don't take care of

these things.

<center>School Culture</center>

Culture is defined by Merriam-Webster online (2010) as "the characteristic features

of everyday existence…as a way of life shared by people in a place or time." Culture is a

powerful force that exists in any organization in which people share some history. It

develops as people work, cope with conflicts, achieve successes, and deal with tragedy

(Deal & Peterson, 2009; Schein, 1985). Culture is always evolving and is influenced by

complex interactions between events, people, and other circumstances (Fullan, 2001;

Morgan, 1977). Sergiovanni (2005) defined the concept of culture as the importance of

ideology, shared values, and norms for behavior.

The staff of Dodge River Middle School overwhelmingly defined the culture of

their building as "family-oriented." This was the most significant theme that emerged

during the interviews and gathering of data. Family and team were mentioned by all of

the interviewees throughout the research process. Embedded in the concept of family

were the caring and nurturing experienced by the faculty from Mrs. North and their co-

workers.

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As you enter the main area of the Dodge River Middle School, banners are visible with the words, "We are family, we are one, we are Dodge River Middle School." Throughout the interviews, it was evident the family atmosphere went beyond slogans on banners through Mrs. North's encouragement and support of staff to care not only for their families but care for each other. Connections were strengthened between faculty members during social gatherings after school and in personal homes of teachers. Teachers saw this culture positively affect student morale as they were comfortable and safe in the building and had the opportunity to observe teachers interacting in a friendly, positive manner. Teachers stated it was a place where they felt like family and wanted to come to work.

Mrs. North recognized her ability to nurture as an outgrowth of her position as eldest child in a large family and the death of her mother at a young age. She stated, "I think you kind of carry over the care-giving and the nurturing and feel responsible for people and to your career." The staff members frequently used descriptors such as "life long friend," "a very caring person," and "one who is always there" when describing Mrs. North.

Staff alluded to Mrs. North's concern for the "whole person" and for her genuine support during illnesses and the death of loved ones. Mrs. North paid special attention not only to the staff member but the activities of their spouse and children. Mrs. North regularly supported and praised her staff and students for their accomplishments. This was evident throughout the interviews and documents that staff shared with the researcher. Mrs. North role modeled caring by acknowledging accomplishments with

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formal presentations in social gatherings, student assemblies, and in private hand-written notes that she placed in teachers' mailboxes. Patterson and Kelleher's (2007) research suggested such role modeling was critical to the continued development of building-level culture.

> One teacher, when asked about the culture of the middle school, explained, Caring. It was caring all the way….She wanted everybody to be a team and not to compete against each other but to work for the good of the school. On testing, on everything. And the kids loved her. You know, she learned the names of everybody in the school. She just did. She spent so much time there and she was also caring about the cafeteria staff, custodians, everybody. Mary brought us under one family umbrella and we all knew that. It was understood.

Yukl (2005) concluded it is important that leaders include stakeholders, such as students and staff, in developing school culture so that it is embedded and becomes part of the daily routine.

Research by Sherman (2000) indicated that women leaders identified more closely with traditional female characteristics such as nurturing and focused on caring for their staff by supporting their pursuit of personal and professional development. One female principal in Sherman's study summed up her approach stating "our power is in our nurturing" (p. 138). Nurturing is commonly linked to terms such as "empowerment" or "enabling" (Jablonski, 1996, p. 245). Nurturing surfaced throughout research and is looked upon as a desirable leadership trait (Logan, 1998; Shakeshaft, 1987). Mrs. North's nurturing was observed through her service to the school and staff, caring for staff in

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good and difficult times, and in developing relationships. Sanders (2009) summed up a caring culture by stating, "The vision of serving and enriching the lives of others is what a culture ought to be" (p. 31).

Within the school building, culture becomes obvious through not only the physical plant and the interactions of people, but also through celebrations of that which is valued by students and staff (Hoy, 1990). When one walks into a truly excellent school, you not only feel the culture through the interactions of the staff and students, but the recognition given through the items and awards that hang on the walls or are displayed in trophy cases (Franey, 2002; Wren, 1999). Celebrations are an indicator of that which is valued in the school (Deal & Peterson, 2009; Schein, 1985).

As you enter Dodge River Middle School and pass the main office, you immediately notice a trophy case and plaques on the wall. These displays include both academic and athletic trophies with students' names along with their achievements. In addition to academics and athletics, good character is also recognized by a large wooden plaque with names added annually on brass name plates.

A significant aspect of the Dodge River Middle School culture was the many celebrations to recognize student achievement, character, and behavior. Assemblies were held on a regular basis and students were recognized for academics, athletics, and citizenship. Awards were designed so all students could receive recognition at some point throughout the year. In addition, Mrs. North established character education gatherings and teen dances held on the weekends in the community. Many hours were spent by staff members participating in and supervising these events. Dodge River Middle School

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students were cared for, both inside and outside the school building, and recognized for their positive contributions to the middle school environment. Faculty and staff also held gatherings to celebrate their achievements.

During Mrs. North's tenure, assemblies to recognize and reward students and staff were held at the end of every quarter. Character education was a topic that was of particular importance at Dodge River Middle School. Teachers selected "character kids" from each classroom and they were recognized on the auditorium stage in front of the student population. Videos were recorded and shown of students participating in positive activities such as studying, athletic events, or performing a good deed for someone. Students received T-shirts, medals, and certificates for displaying positive character.

In addition, Mrs. North reported a variety of activities, events and celebrations were planned and orchestrated for the students. She explained,

We had lots of events for the kids…everything from ice cream socials to Dodge River Town, Dodge River Dollars, to Dodge Mustang assemblies, to [retired teacher's name] awards for good citizenship and academics. Sports assemblies recognizing that type of activity to academic teams and character education assemblies in recognition of those kinds of people….With the drug-free schools they went to camp for training at the lake for leadership. So you had star leaders and different things.

The staff buttressed Mrs. North's statements by sharing that they supervised many events for the students. One particular celebratory event sponsored by the Dodge River Staff that was initiated under Mrs. North's supervision was Mobile Teen, a social

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gathering for students that was held for multiple years. Several town halls were

sponsored by community organizations where students were invited to come to dance

and socialize. The monthly dance was attended by 150 plus students and was a safe, fun

event held on Friday evenings where students could interact in a drug-free

environment. It also allowed teachers and students to enjoy each other in a social setting.

Modeling Mrs. North's servant leadership, the staff became stewards of the children

entrusted to them. According to Spears (2004), stewards assume a commitment to serving

others. In addition, stewards develop a sense that their time, talent, and even

relationships are of value in the greater cause (DePree, 1989). Servant leadership calls for

leaders to be stewards and the staff, under Mrs. North's direction, became stewards who

created a culture that celebrated students and their successes.

In addition, the staff at Dodge River Middle School held celebrations. They

celebrated milestones at school such as the beginning and ending of the year, completion

of state mandated testing, faculty birthdays, and holidays with gatherings at noon, after

school and at homes or other venues in town. The staff mentioned enjoying the

camaraderie and relaxation with their co-workers and considered it a time to strengthen

bonds.

Research indicated leadership style has a direct impact on developing school

culture. While the authoritarian leader may be more directive and lead with a coercive

power (Yukl, 2005), the servant leader focuses on nurturing the strengths of staff

members to develop contributing teacher-lead teams (Franey, 2002). Mrs. North sought

out teachers with strengths in various areas and encouraged them to contribute to various

teams. Research by Harris, Ballenger, and Jones (2007) also suggested that female

leaders indicated building community as one of their strengths. They stressed,

"Developing a sense of community was a guiding, passionate vision that grew out of an

almost spiritual desire to bring people together. The goal in every case was to make

education better for children" (p. 7).

As teams were formed throughout Mrs. North's tenure at Dodge River Middle

School, the emphasis was shifted from one of competition between teachers to

cooperation among grade level teams as well as departmental teams. The teachers

perceived this act as one of caring about them and acknowledging their expertise.

Finegan (2000) stated, for employees "the best predictor of commitment is the perception

of their work environment" (p. 167). One teacher described how teamwork effected the

commitment of the employees:

> And, you know, everybody works hard at that middle school….everybody tries so
>
> hard….You didn't need that competition. And so Mary decided that rather than
>
> competition we needed to work together. And so she really led us in the direction of
>
> social studies teacher on south team works with social studies teacher on north team
>
> and we really, really got somewhere after we were able to do that. We shared
>
> expertise and curriculum ideas. And so I think she made us value one another as
>
> teachers and all of us are heading towards the same goal. That is doing the best job
>
> we can in that classroom.

Bringing people together and building successful teams within a working

community increases the productivity and accountability of an institution. Lencioni

(2002) stated, "There is nothing like the fear of letting down respected teammates that motivates people to improve their performance" (p. 213). Furthermore, the feeling of community will increase retention of employees and the likelihood that the collective goals will be met.

Spears (2004) asserted that much of the feeling of community has been lost in recent years as we have moved from a society filled with small, family-oriented businesses and organizations to larger, less personal institutions. Greenleaf (2008) stated,

> All that is needed to rebuild community as a viable life form for large numbers of people is for enough servant-leaders to show the way, not by mass movements, but by each servant-leader demonstrating his own unlimited liability for a quite specific community-related group. (p. 40)

Collaboration and team meetings were a constant part of the conversations with teachers who were interviewed. The staff began collaborative efforts well before it became the norm across the district with the use of the Professional Learning Communities model. The teams were expected to meet and share their expertise across divisions within the school and district. Although community building is time consuming, it develops stronger coalitions that strengthen the resolve in positive growth (Jablonski, 1996). At Dodge River Middle School, staff noted that team meetings took a significant amount of time and effort, yet recognized their input was valued and used by Mrs. North in her decision-making process.

Conclusions

This study sought a deeper understanding of the effects of servant leadership in the public school setting and to describe how the leader's characteristics and skills manifested themselves in her position as principal. Because a female was chosen for the study, the dynamics of gender were also examined. In addition, particular attention was paid to the culture of the school. The servant leader studied was identified by educational professionals as one who exemplified the characteristics outlined by Spears (2004) as common traits of a servant leader. Individual and focus group interviews were conducted with purposefully selected staff members who worked for the servant leader to describe how her behaviors impacted the staff and culture of the middle school. The servant leader was also interviewed extensively and artifacts were examined for supportive data.

Question One: Servant Leadership as Exhibited by a Female Leader

The researcher sought answers to the first question by spending a considerable amount of time with Mrs. North, both at her home and at the home of the researcher. This permitted time for in-depth discussion of her upbringing, educational training, and her experiences at Dodge River Middle School in a relaxed setting. The conversation was friendly and open, producing clear, concise responses from Mrs. North about herself and her behaviors. The researcher observed, although her responses were not lengthy, they were precise and meaningful, aligning with her staff's description that she could accomplish much with few words and "a look."

In defining the servant leadership role from the leader's perspective, Mrs. North identified her faith as a significant factor in her leadership style and decision-making,

relying on prayer and meditation for support and direction. Mrs. North meditated on a daily basis and used prayer for guidance in the decision-making. In her interactions with staff, she would openly state that she would take time to pray about solutions to problems encountered at school. She also prayed for her staff and their families. Her faith was clearly exhibited in times of illnesses and other crises through her calm demeanor, supportive actions, and "healing words." Mrs. North stated that she "did not leave staff out there alone" in times of crises and demonstrated this by visiting staff in the hospital, going to their homes in times of need, and attending family funerals. These behaviors caused the staff to believe she focused on the whole person first and were certain she cared for them, both personally and professionally. As describe by Harris, Ballenger, and Jones (2007), Mrs. North was likely to "assess all actions, decisions, and ideas through a critical lens of spirituality, measured by the standards of ethical, moral, just, caring, equity, fairness, and democracy" (p. 4).

Mrs. North was a leader who strived to support the staff by building community and encouraged professional growth through collaborative processes with staff. At the beginning of her tenure as principal, she shifted the focus from a competitive atmosphere to one of cooperation and collaboration. Mrs. North developed teams across grade levels and curriculum to increase communication between staff members and encouraged them to share ideas that were successful in their classrooms with other teachers. The intent was to strengthen the overall educational experience of the students and to make Dodge River Middle School a pleasant place to work. Literature supported that building community was a particular strength for women leaders and "developing a sense of community was a

guiding, passionate vision that grew out of an almost spiritual desire to bring people together" (Harris, Ballenger, & Jones, 2007, p. 7). Mrs. North's goal was to support the staff and do what was best for the children.

Family was also important to Mrs. North. After the early death of her mother and as the oldest of eight children, she became a matriarchal figure in her own family. Her experiences sensitized her to the need for staff to care for their families. She facilitated this by encouraging staff to take the time necessary to care for their personal families and encouraged them to treat each other as members of the Dodge River Middle School family. Teachers were allowed time to care for familial needs and encouraged to assist coworkers so they could support their families. Her stance removed the liability caring for family needs may create in the workplace (Burke, 2002) and supported the idea that balance in personal and professional responsibilities helps to create employees who are more satisfied and dedicated to their work (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Eckman, 2004).

In addition, Spears stated, "The servant leader is deeply committed to the growth of each and every individual within the institution" (p. 16). Mrs. North was particularly adept at recognizing strengths in individuals and would encourage their personal and professional growth through use of her persuasive tactics. She regularly sent teachers to training and expected them to come back and share the new materials with the faculty. Mrs. North gave the teachers the ability to be in charge of implementing changes when they became the experts and presenters. She talked to individuals, pointed out their strengths and encouraged them to accept challenges. She also celebrated their accomplishments through verbal praise, hand-written notes, and personal words of

appreciation. Using these tactics, Mrs. North developed people and built leadership within the school that continued on after her retirement.

Because Mrs. North was a female leader, potential gender issues were explored. Mrs. North realized some bias outside of her building at the central office level but shared that she did not carry any negative feelings regarding occasional lack of regard for her ideas and abilities. She did experience situations where she had to verbally explain that she could handle middle school aged student discipline, a role that traditionally may have been delegated to a male administrator. She also realized some support from male administrators in the form of encouragement and direction in gaining her position as an administrator. This was supported in other research by reports of women increasing their visibility and social capital when mentored by highly respected male administrators (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Harris, Ballenger, & Jones, 2007).

<center>Question Two: Stakeholder Perceptions</center>

The staff employed at Dodge River Middle School was interviewed to gather their perceptions of Mrs. North, her leadership style, and how she shaped the culture in their building. The researcher compared the servant leader's self-description with the perceptions of her behaviors as defined by the staff. Interestingly, the staff described Mrs. North and her behaviors in congruence with her self-description. Therefore, the findings that emerged from the first two research questions were very similar. This indicated to the researcher that Mrs. North was a person who had a firm knowledge of herself and whose intentions and behaviors were perceived as she intended.

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The staff described Mrs. North as "genuine" and "authentic." They were aware of her spirituality and mentioned she would tell them she would "pray about it and get back to you tomorrow." The teachers were aware of her Catholic upbringing and training as well as her time as a nun. This, along with her behaviors, created an expectation that faith was part of her daily life. In times when challenging decisions were being made, the staff indicated Mrs. North would "cross herself" and say, "Hail, Mary." Although they did not believe Mrs. North thrust her faith on them, they were aware that it was an important part of her being.

Secondly, staff stated that Mrs. North was collaborative in her decision-making process, relying on staff input for direction in school leadership. Nearly all interviewees mentioned that she would gather input from staff members before making a decision that would affect the staff or students. Several agreed, "She was the best listener I think I've ever known, a very good listener" and were appreciative that she considered their opinions valuable. Collins (2001) and Yukl (2006) asserted transformational leaders consulted with staff to discover areas of need and included staff in finding solutions. However, several teachers were frustrated at the amount of time that it took to make decisions due to listening to many individuals' feedback. Various team meetings, held to discuss programs or changes, also took time from their schedules. In the end, the staff stated they appreciated her efforts. Even if the outcome were not what they had hoped, they knew their ideas had been heard and considered.

According to the stakeholders, Mrs. North had the ability to recognize people's strengths and would use persuasion to encourage their participation as leaders within the

school. Mrs. North had worked in the district for over 20 years before she became an administrator. She had the opportunity to work with the staff as a teacher and counselor. The veteran staff members had long-term relationships with her and she had taken the time to learn about their strengths and abilities. Mrs. North used this knowledge and her persuasive tactics to convince staff to grow professionally and share their knowledge with others. She sent teachers to many workshops, some of them in her place. She would then expect them to come back and present the new material to the staff. They indicated that she was never coercive but would meet with them individually and had an uncanny ability to "let them have her way." Spears (2002) suggested the servant leader recognizes that each person in his organization has worth beyond his work contributions and does everything possible to help all employees develop their person, professional, and spiritual abilities to reach their potential as contributing members of society. Other staff members asserted that "She earned it….She would do anything for you so you wanted to do anything for her." One teacher summed up Mrs. North's influence by stating, "She always knew that there was more in you than you thought was in yourself."

Mrs. North was also described as "selfless" by her staff members. They indicated that she spent many hours after school working on paperwork so she could be available during the day for staff and student needs. Her truck was seen many evenings and weekends in her parking space at school. They also mentioned that she helped to supervise and sponsor events outside the school day such as the monthly teen dances and athletic and fine arts activities. It was important to Mrs. North to show her support of staff by attending family weddings and funerals and visiting staff in the hospital. "Servant

leadership, like stewardship, assumes first and foremost a commitment to serving the needs of others" (Spears, 2004, p. 15). The staff believed she put their needs before her own at times and one teacher stated, "It's taken its toll on her because she worries so much….It's like she has become the worrier for the entire Dodge River Middle School for a long period of time….She takes on everyone's problems."

Finally, the researcher examined potential gender issues with the staff. The teachers were taken aback when they were asked about possible gender bias. Nearly all the teachers had a questioning look on their face when the subject was raised. They indicated that Mrs. North did not experience much, if any, gender bias in her building. However, when the researcher probed the question, nearly all indicated that there was possible gender bias from the central office level. One teacher had witnessed a specific case of a male getting credit for an idea brought to the table by Mrs. North. Other teachers indicated that Mrs. North did not discuss the bias that she experienced but they were aware that she had to "walk twice as far to get what she wanted" than the male administrators. Other research indicated women must be better prepared and have stronger credentials than male counterparts to be seen as effective leaders (Gardella & Haynes, 2004; Harris, Ballenger, & Jones, 2007; Jamieson, 1995). It was evident that the trust the staff had with Mrs. North, coupled with her authenticity, variety of experiences, longevity in the building, and leadership style minimized the bias which typically may have occurred in her building due to her gender.

Question Three: Influence on School Culture

Culture is a powerful force that exists in any organization in which people share a history. Schein (1985) asserted,

> There has to have been enough shared experience to have led to a shared view, and this shared view has to have worked for long enough to have come to be taken for granted and to have dropped out of awareness. Culture, in this sense, is a learned product of group experience. (p. 7)

The final research question sought to examine how servant leadership manifests itself in the culture of a public school.

The culture of Dodge River Middle School, with Mrs. North as leader, was family-oriented. Mrs. North exhibited behaviors that supported not only the school as a family but the families of staff members. Teachers noticed her dedication to her own family and were appreciative of her allowing them time from school to take care of their families. Although the school district allowed for personal and medical leave, Mrs. North assured staff that it was necessary for them to take the time and openly supported them rather than questioning their needs or inducing feelings of guilt for taking time away from their work. She also followed up by asking questions about their family, showing her concern for their well-being or interest in their activities. In the hallway and auditorium of Dodge River Middle School, banners were displayed that read "We are family, we are one, we are Dodge River Middle School." Mrs. North supported the motto by encouraging staff members to step in during classes for coworkers when they needed to attend to family

matters. She also promoted social gatherings of staff to strengthen their bonds through her direction and attendance.

Another significant aspect of the Dodge River Middle School culture was the many celebrations to recognize student achievement, character, and behavior. Celebrations are an indicator of what is valued in the school (Deal & Peterson, 2009; Schein, 1985). Mrs. North planned and promoted assemblies which recognized positive student character, athletics, and academic achievements. Students were recognized on the stage in front of their peer group and received rewards such as t-shirts, medals, and certificates. The staff was also involved in these celebrations, creating videos of students performing acts of kindness or achieving a goal and assisting with the presentations. The Dodge River Middle School staff celebrated milestones such as the beginning and ending of the school year, completion of statewide testing, birthdays, and other accomplishments with luncheons or other gatherings both inside and outside the school building. Mrs. North also recognized teachers' accomplishments with personal notes and words of praise as she visited their classrooms.

Finally, staff at the middle school understood that teamwork was part of their culture. Mrs. North helped to shift the focus from one of competition to one of collaboration. Team members were expected to work together and support each other by sharing curriculum ideas and teaching strategies. This enabled veteran and new teachers alike to learn strategies from each other. Lencioni (2002) stated, "There is nothing like the fear of letting down respected teammates that motivates people to improve their

performance" (p. 213). Dodge River Middle School's teachers worked as teams to improve the educational experience for the whole child. One staff member explained,

It was caring all the way, you know, and team. She wanted everybody to be a team and not to compete against each other but to work for the good of the school. On testing, on everything….Mary brought us under one family umbrella and we all knew that. It was understood.

Research supported Mrs. North's desire to bring the faculty together for the good of all so that it became embedded in the culture (Yukl, 2005; Sherman, 2000). Sanders (2009) summed it up by stating, "The vision of serving and enriching the lives of others is what a culture ought to be" (p. 31). With Mrs. North as their leader, staff agreed that the culture of Dodge River Middle School was a place where they felt like family, cared for each other, and wanted to come to work.

<div align="center">Implications for Educational Leaders</div>

Findings from this study lead to several implications for educational leaders and their practices. They include the following:

1. Educational leaders should consider the importance and impact of serving and caring for others and placing the needs of those around them as a high priority.

2. Leaders must invest time and energy in assisting employees in realizing their potential through professional development and offering opportunities for them to lead within their building.

3. Consensus building and collaborative efforts, although time consuming, help to build community, strengthen staff morale and involvement as well as increase staff ownership in school improvement.

4. School leaders should consider the effects of building relationships and the use of persuasion over coercive tactics when leading professional staff.

5. Servant leadership traits are worthy of examination and should be included in coursework along with transformational leadership in administrator preparation programs.

6. Meditation, prayer, or spiritual rejuvenation may be useful in caring for oneself and avoiding job related fatigue. Administrator training programs should address the need for rejuvenation in their curriculum.

7. Educational leaders should take notice of their impact on the culture of their building and gather input from staff members, students, and community members on ideas for improvement.

8. Leaders should be made aware of the importance of the care and personal support of their staff outside of the work setting and its effects on staff motivation at work.

Recommendations for Future Research

The following suggestions are recommended for further research:

1. Further cases should be studied involving servant leaders who are currently employed. These studies may increase the accuracy of

interview responses rather than relying on memories that may have been "clouded" over time. It would also allow for in-depth observations of the culture of the building and the behaviors of the servant leader in the work place.

2.   A study should be conducted to assess the effects, if any, of servant leadership on student achievement.

3.   Further studies of male administrators deemed servant leaders should be studied to compare the observations of staff members led by female servant leaders.

4.   Studies should be conducted on the importance spirituality plays in the role of servant leadership.

5.   Studies should be considered to compare the culture of buildings led by servant leaders in contrast with those led by non-servant leaders.

6.   Similar case studies of the behaviors of servant leaders should be expanded to include the observations of students, board members, and central office level administrators.

7.   A comparative study should be conducted on teacher retention in districts with servant leaders vs. those with non-servant leaders.

8.   Research on gender issues, especially within central office administration and school boards should be further explored.

Summary

Chapter Five included a summary of the findings, discussion of the findings, conclusion, implications for educational leaders, and suggestions for further research. The three research questions were answered in the conclusion. The researcher found that servant leadership and its defining traits are worthy of consideration for a leader in a public education setting. The servant leader in this study was respected and trusted. With serving others as the top priority, role modeling service to the staff and students while using "power with" rather than "power over" strategies, the leader encouraged faculty and staff to bring their abilities and ideas to the table and gave them opportunities to grow and claim ownership of their school improvement. Servant leadership was shown to manifest itself in a family-oriented school culture that celebrated success and was a place where people wanted to live and work.

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Appendix A

Letter to Superintendent

<Researcher's home address>
<City, State, Zip code>
<Date>

<Title> <First Name> <Last Name>
<Position>
<District>
<Address>

Dear <Title> <Last Name>

I am writing to ask your permission to contact members of the faculty and staff of <School Name> regarding participation in my doctoral dissertation research project at the University of Missouri-Columbia. The staff at <School Name> has been selected as the focus of this research because of the leadership behaviors of a former building principal which has been indentified to be within a specific leadership style. I believe the information gathered through this study will positively contribute to the body of knowledge regarding effective leadership behaviors and attitudes in public education settings.

This study will require that qualitative data be gathered. I will contact members of your staff to solicit volunteers for individual interviews. The questions in the interview will be used to gain insight into leadership behaviors and characteristics of the principal from the faculty members in the building. In addition, I would like to visit the school to gather any documentation or artifacts that would add to the inquiry and investigation of this leader's impact.

I would certainly appreciate the faculty and staff members participating in my study. The individual identity of participants and the participating institution will not be revealed at any time in my study or in any other future publications. In addition, participants may withdraw at any time without penalty. Upon request, I will provide the results of the study, including summary of the data and associated reports. At all times, confidentiality of individual responses will be protected.

If you have any questions about this study, please contact me via email at cls337@mail.missouri.edu or by phone at (660) 815-1299. Dr. Sandy Hutchinson, my dissertation advisor for this research project may be contacted by email at Hutchinson@ucmo.edu or by phone at (660) 543-4720.Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Carol L. Smith
Doctoral Candidate
University of Missouri-Columbia

Appendix B

Letter to Leader

<Researcher's home address>
<City, State, Zip code>
<Date>

<Title> <First Name> <Last Name>
<Position>
<District>
<Address>

Dear <Title> <Last Name>,

Thank you for your consideration to participate in the study of effective leadership practices and the impact of that leadership upon a public education setting. This study is being conducted to complete a doctorate in Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis through the University of Missouri-Columbia.

I am requesting your participation in my study as a former public school leader. You have been selected as the focus of this research because of your leadership behaviors which have been identified to be within a specific leadership style. Your participation will provide valuable assistance as I examine factors of specific leadership behaviors.

With your permission, I will be contacting you to set up a time to do three to four interviews. Each interview should take approximately 60-90 minutes. They will be designed to collect your thoughts and experiences as a public school administrator.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Boards of the University of Missouri-Columbia. The project is being supervised by Dr. Sandy Hutchinson, Doctoral Supervisor, Educational Administration, University of Central Missouri. If you need further answers regarding research participant's rights, please contact University of Missouri Institutional Review Board at (573) 882-9585 or by email at
http://www.research.missouri.edu/web_research/compliance/campus_irb/campusirbpage.html.

If you have any questions about this study, please contact me via email at cls337@mail.missouri.edu or by phone at (660) 815-1299. Dr. Sandy Hutchinson, my advisor, may be reached at Hutchinson@ucmo.edu or by phone (660) 543-4720. Thank you in advance for your assistance with this project.

Sincerely,

Carol L. Smith
Doctoral Candidate
University of Missouri-Columbia

Appendix C

Letter to Staff Participants

<Researcher's home address>
<City, State, Zip code>
<Date>

<Title> <First Name> <Last Name>
<Position>
<District>
<Address>

Dear <Title> <Last Name>,

Thank you for your consideration to participate in the study of effective leadership practices demonstrated by your past principal and the impact of that leadership upon a public education setting. This study is being conducted to complete a doctorate in Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis through the University of Missouri-Columbia.

I am requesting your participation in my study as a faculty and staff member. Your school has been selected as the focus of this research because of your former principal's leadership behaviors which have been identified to be within a specific leadership style. Your participation will provide valuable assistance as I examine factors of specific leadership behaviors. Permission to contact you was granted by <superintendent>.

With your permission, I will be contacting you to set up a time to do an interview. The interview should take approximately 60-90 minutes. It will be designed to collect your observations and thoughts on the leadership of <Principal Name> during the time she was your direct supervisor.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Boards of the University of Missouri-Columbia. The project is being supervised by Dr. Sandy Hutchinson, Doctoral Supervisor, Educational Administration, University of Central Missouri. If you need further answers regarding research participant's rights, please contact University of Missouri Institutional Review Board at (573) 882-9585 or by email at http://www.research.missouri.edu/web_research/compliance/campus_irb/campusirbpage.html.

If you have any questions about this study, please contact me via email at cls337@mail.missouri.edu or by phone at (660) 815-1299. Dr. Sandy Hutchinson, my advisor, may be reached at Hutchinson@ucmo.edu or by phone (660) 543-4720. Thank you in advance for your assistance with this project.

Sincerely,
Carol L. Smith
Doctoral Candidate
University of Missouri-Columbia

Appendix D

Consent Form for Leader

Identification of Researchers: This research is being done by Carol Smith. I am with the Department of Educational Leadership & Policy Analysis at the University of Missouri-Columbia.

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this research is to examine the practices and effects a female principal with specific characteristics has on the staff and culture of a public middle school.

Request for Participation: I am inviting you to participate in the case study as a leader exhibiting a certain leadership style. It is up to you whether you would like to participate. If you decide not to participate, you will not be penalized in any way. You can also decide to stop at any time without penalty. If you do not wish to answer any of the questions, you may simply skip them.

Description of Research Method: The research involves participating in three to four interview session that should last from 60 to 90 minutes each. The researcher will ask about your personal perceptions of yourself as a leader and your leadership behaviors and the activities in your school building during the time of your leadership. You will also have a chance to ask questions. I will also interview staff members who have been directly under your supervision regarding your leadership style and behaviors. If you would like to know the results of this study, please contact Dr. Sandy Hutchinson. She can be reached at hutchinson@ucmo.edu or at (660) 543-4720. You may also reach Carol Smith at cls337@mail.missouri.edu or (660) 815-1299. Please note that we cannot give any individual results, as all results are kept confidential.

Privacy: All of the information we collect will be kept confidential. Participants identities will be known only to the researchers and steps will be taken to conceal your identity should the results be presented to the public.

Explanation of Risks: The risks to this study are similar to the risks of everyday life.

Explanation of Benefits: Leadership styles are studied to add to the knowledge base of current and future leaders. This research project will help leaders make decisions on the benefits of a specific leadership style.

Questions about Your Rights: If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the University of Missouri Institutional Review Board at (573) 882-9585.

If you would like to participate, please sign a copy of this letter and return it to me. The other copy is for you to keep.

I agree to participate in your study on school leadership.

_____
(Participant's Signature)

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Appendix E

Consent Form for Staff Participant

Identification of Researchers: This research is being done by Carol Smith. I am with the Department of Educational Leadership & Policy Analysis at the University of Missouri-Columbia.

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this research is to examine the practices and effects a female principal with specific characteristics has on the staff and culture of a public middle school.

Request for Participation: I am inviting you to participate in the case study of a leader exhibiting a certain leadership style. It is up to you whether you would like to participate. If you decide not to participate, you will not be penalized in any way. You can also decide to stop at any time without penalty. If you do not wish to answer any of the questions, you may simply skip them.

Exclusions: You must have been directly supervised by the selected leader to participate in this research project.

Description of Research Method: The research involves participating in an interview session that should last from 60 to 90. The researcher will ask about your personal perceptions of this leader and the activities in your school building during the time of her leadership. You will also have a chance to ask questions. If you would like to know the results of this study, please contact Dr. Sandy Hutchinson. She can be reached at hutchinson@ucmo.edu or at (660) 543-4720. You may also reach Carol Smith at cls337@mail.missouri.edu. Please note that we cannot give any individual results, as all results are kept confidential.

Privacy: All of the information we collect will be kept confidential. Participants identities will be known only to the researchers and steps will be taken to conceal your identity should the results be presented to the public.

Explanation of Risks: The risks to this study are similar to the risks of everyday life.

Explanation of Benefits: Leadership styles are studied to add to the knowledge base of current and future leaders. This research project will help leaders make decisions on the benefits of a specific leadership style.

Questions about Your Rights: If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the University of Missouri Institutional Review Board at (573) 882-9585.

If you would like to participate, please sign a copy of this letter and return it to me. The other copy is for you to keep.

I agree to participate in your study on school leadership.

_____
(Participant's Signature)

Appendix F

Consent Form for Focus Group Participants

Identification of Researchers: This research is being done by Carol Smith. I am with the Department of Educational Leadership & Policy Analysis at the University of Missouri-Columbia.

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this research is to examine the practices and effects a female principal with specific characteristics has on the staff and culture of a public middle school.

Request for Participation: I am inviting you to participate in the case study of a leader exhibiting a certain leadership style. It is up to you whether you would like to participate. If you decide not to participate, you will not be penalized in any way. You can also decide to stop at any time without penalty. If you do not wish to answer any of the questions, you may simply skip them.

Exclusions: You must have been directly supervised by the selected leader to participate in this research project.

Description of Research Method: The research involves participating in a focus group interview session that should last from 60 to 90 minutes. The researcher will ask about your personal perceptions of this leader and the activities in your school building during the time of her leadership. You will also have a chance to ask questions. If you would like to know the results of this study, please contact Dr. Sandy Hutchinson. She can be reached at hutchinson@ucmo.edu or at (660) 543-4720. You may also reach Carol Smith at cls337@mail.missouri.edu or (660) 815-1299. Please note that we cannot give any individual results, as all results are kept confidential.

Privacy: All of the information we collect will be kept confidential. Participants identities will be known only to the researchers and steps will be taken to conceal your identity should the results be presented to the public.

Explanation of Risks: The risks to this study are similar to the risks of everyday life.

Explanation of Benefits: Leadership styles are studied to add to the knowledge base of current and future leaders. This research project will help leaders make decisions on the benefits of a specific leadership style.

Questions about Your Rights: If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the University of Missouri Institutional Review Board at (573) 882-9585.

If you would like to participate, please sign a copy of this letter and return it to me. The other copy is for you to keep.

I agree to participate in your study on school leadership.

_____
(Participant's Signature)

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Appendix G

Principal Interview

1. How would you describe yourself as a leader?

2. What were your goals as a leader as you worked with others in your building?

3. Please tell me about your background. Can you tell me about your family and the effects they had on your career?

4. Please tell me about your training and employment history. How did you get to your position in school leadership?

5. What do you see as your greatest strength(s)? Personal and professional?

6. What is your strongest leadership trait(s)?

7. How did you ensure others were appreciated and respected in your building?

8. What was your responsibility in nurturing the people working in your building?

9. How did you bring others together to identify and work toward common goals?

10. How did you exhibit your personal character to others?

11. What types of things did you do to develop the vision and mission of your school?

12. In what manner did you model the direction you were moving in the building?

13. How did you empower others to be the leaders in and of themselves within the building?

14. In your leadership role, what barriers or challenges did you encounter?

15. Did you believe any of the barriers were gender specific? Leadership style specific?

16. What supports did you realize? Were they gender specific? Leadership style

    specific?

17. What type of school culture did you attempt to develop?

18. How did you facilitate the development of that culture? What did you implement

    to portray your vision and mission?

19. Do you have any closing thoughts you would like to share?

Appendix H

Faculty/Staff and Focus Group Interview

1.   Tell me about <subject's name>.

2.   How would you describe her leadership?

3.   What were the principal's strengths? Both character and professional?

4.   Were you nurtured or supported by the principal? If so, how?

5.   In what ways did your principal bring people together toward a common goal?

6.   What is your impression of the principal's demeanor, attitude and relationship

     toward you?

7.   How were you impacted by the example and direction provided by the principal's

     leadership?

8.   How were you encouraged to contribute to the leadership of the school?

9.   What concerns did you have toward the leadership style of your principal?

10. In what ways could the leadership have contributed to your greater success?

11. What type of atmosphere or school culture did this leader promote?

12. How did that manifest itself with the staff and students?

13.   Did the leader's gender help or hinder in her ability to be an affective leader? If

     so, in what ways? Help? Hinder?

14. Did the leader's style help or hinder in her ability to be an affective leader? If so,

     in what ways? Help? Hinder?

VITA

Carol L. Smith was born on March 1, 1958, in Marshall, Missouri, the first daughter and third child born to Emmett L. and Betty Hartley Smith. She graduated from Marshall High School in 1976 and began her post-secondary education at Southwest Missouri State University (now Missouri State University) in Springfield. She later transferred to Central Missouri State University (now University of Central Missouri) in Warrensburg where she completed a B. S. in elementary and special education (1979). She then earned a M.S.E. from Central Missouri State University (1981) and a M.Ed. from Boston University (1984). As part of the University of Missouri-Columbia statewide cohort program, Carol completed an Ed. D. in Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis (2010). She has held a variety of positions in education allowing her to work with children from birth through the age of 21. Initially, Carol was employed as a special education teacher in the Independence Missouri Public School District. Later, she accepted a position in West Germany with the Department of Defense Dependent Schools as a teacher and behavioral consultant. In addition to her classroom teaching experiences, Carol was employed as director of Marshall Public School's Parents As Teachers program and director of Saline County's alternative high school. She recently retired as principal of Marshall High School after working for Marshall Public Schools for the past 25 years. She and her husband, Al Simmons, have a son, Cole, and a daughter, Leah, and reside in rural Marshall, Missouri.